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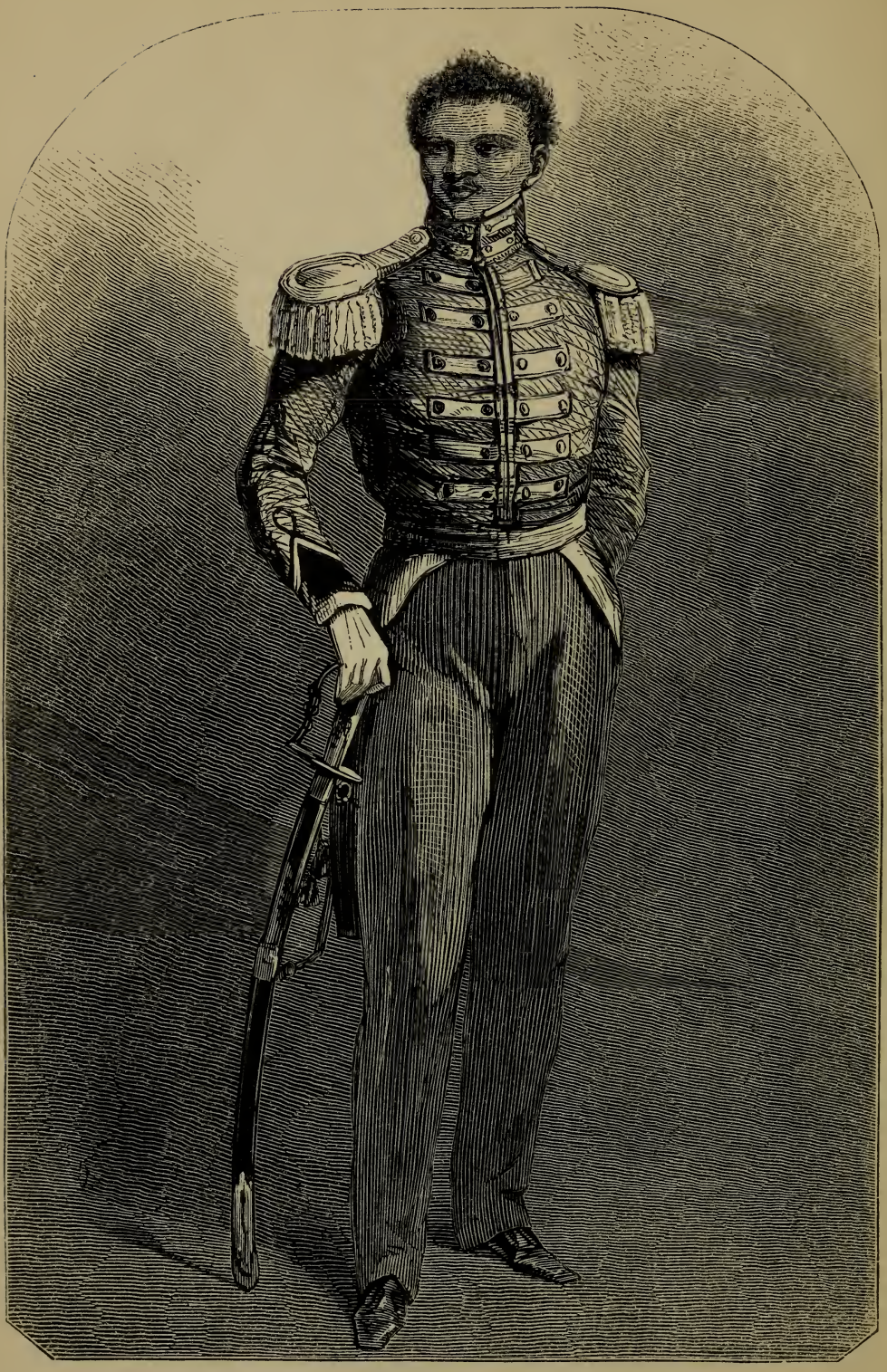

CHOU-FAA, THE REIGNING PRINCE OF SIAM. *See page 87.*

NARRATIVE

OF A

RESIDENCE IN SIAM.

BY FREDERICK ARTHUR NEALE,

Author of "Eight Years in Syria," &c.

LONDON:

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL ILLUSTRATED LIBRARY,

227, STRAND.

1852.

NARRATIVE OF A RESIDENCE

AT THE CAPITAL OF

THE KINGDOM OF SIAM;

WITH A DESCRIPTION OF

THE MANNERS, CUSTOMS, AND LAWS

OF THE

MODERN SIAMESE.

BY

FRED. ARTHUR NEALE,

Formerly in the Service of his Siamese Majesty; Author of "Eight Years in Syria, Palestine, and Asia Minor."

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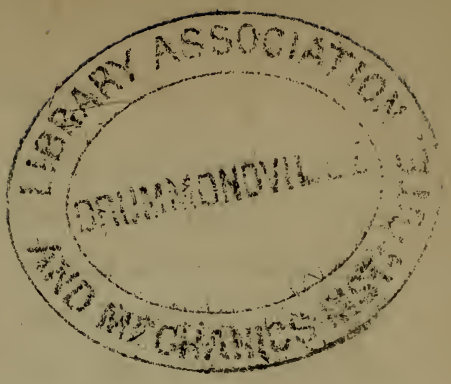

ADVERTISEMENT.

At a time when the relations of this country with the nations east of the Ganges are occupying much attention, it is hoped that the following work, relating to a country hitherto very imperfectly known to Europeans, will prove interesting to the British public. With the territory of Siam, lying as it does between the Burmese empire, with which we are now at war, and the confines of China, we must ultimately have greater intercourse than we have hitherto had. The Siamese and the Burmese look on each other—with what reason is a different question—as "natural enemies," and ultimately the extension of our commerce, if not of our political power, in that region of Asia, will render it absolutely necessary that we should have some firm commercial footing in Siam.

In the following work, while a personal narrative is given of the experiences of the author in that country, an attempt has also been made to give, from accurate and original sources, some account of the manners and customs, the character and disposition, of the Siamese; but, above all, of the

natural wealth and resources of the district, and of the mode in which these could be developed. A chapter has been added on the History of Siam, and another on recent embassies to the Siamese court, in which it is hoped a sufficiently impartial account is given of the difficulties of Siamese negotiations, to counterbalance what may be considered by many as the somewhat sanguine views of the author.

The engravings have all been prepared from drawings made in the country, and their accuracy may be relied on.

London, *May* 1, 1852.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

When I first undertook to compile, partly from notes and partly from a pretty retentive memory, the incidents and narrations which compose the following brief sketch of the Siamese, their manners and customs, and the nature and produce of their country, I had already run the gauntlet through the host of critics and reviewers, who kindly condescended to discuss the merits, or otherwise, of my first-born literary production, "Eight Years in Syria, Palestine, and Asia Minor." It is needless to say, that trembling as I did under the ordeal, my alarm was only exceeded by my gratitude for the lenient, nay, in some instances, flattering reception I met with from the public press. This, and this alone, has induced and emboldened me to assume afresh the *steel pen of modern authorship*, and though I do not aim at distinction on the score of enlightening the British public on the all-important subject of the statistics and commercial wealth of an empire, rich indeed in its natural produce, and but slightly known to the majority of readers, still, I am not without hope that this volume may contain some information

regarding the habits of a people who are at the best semi-barbarous, at the same time that some small knowledge may be gleaned regarding the national wealth and commercial enterprise of Siam.

I may here, in self-defence, state that at the period of my visit to that distant Eastern empire, I was, though even then somewhat of a traveller, quite young both in years and understanding: were it not for this, I should have most assuredly amassed more valuable information to offer to the public; but geographical information and statistics are not often the hobbies of youth, and a shooting party or a rowing match had, at that period, more charms for me than the pursuit of more useful knowledge.

F. A. NEALE.

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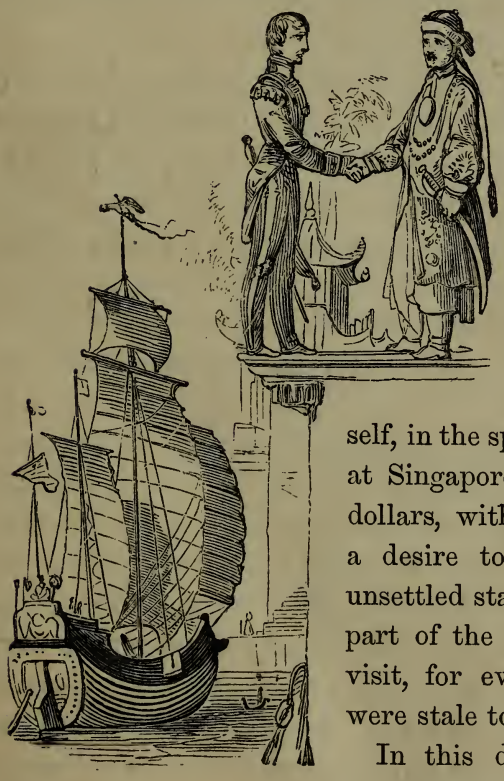
SIAM
and the
adjacent countries.
Drawn to illustrate M.r Neal's Work.
John Dower. Gly.

RESIDENCE IN SIAM.

CHAPTER I.

Departure from Singapore.—Squally weather.—Dangerous situation of the ship.—Experience of a Typhoon near Pulo Obi.—Description of it.—Progress to Siam —Slaughter of the ducks.—Arrival at the Bar of Siam.



HAVING travelled over the greater part of the Madras Presidency and revelled in its mangoes, been at Bombay and tasted its famed *ducks* (a species of fish), sojourned at Penang and Malacca and feasted on mangostins, I found myself, in the spring of 1840, a dilettante at Singapore, a waster of time and dollars, with a wish to remain and a desire to depart, and in a sad unsettled state of mind as to the next part of the world most desirable to visit, for even China and Sumatra were stale to me.

In this dilemma I one day encountered the captain of a fine Bombay ship, called the "Adelaide:" I had before made a voyage

with her from Penang to Tellicherry on the Malabar coast, and a merry time we had of it on board.

"Holloa!" exclaimed the captain, "you here! why what port are you bound for now?"

"That is just the question I was about to put to you myself," was my rejoinder.

"Oh, as for me," he replied, "I am bound for Bangkok, in Siam, and sail to-morrow evening if the weather permits,—a queer outlandish place it is,—and if you have nothing better to do, take a trip down there with me; I'll go bound you won't repent the voyage."

"Agreed," said I; and agreed it was. I went to mine hotel, packed up my effects, took an affectionate farewell of mine hostess, bid adieu to Singapore, and got into a boat that rowed manfully for the good ship "Adelaide."

The best cabin in the ship was allotted to me, and as I was quite an old stager at voyaging, I occupied myself the whole of next day in putting things into shipshape order: my bed was well slung; my clothes properly arranged; books, and charts, and paint-boxes, and instruments, secured from tumbling off the locker; one or two little pictures slung upon brass hooks in conspicuous places; and this completed, I was ready to set forth on my voyage to explore lands hitherto unexplored by me.

Towards evening a great many queer-looking packages came off, and a little later, Monseigneur the Roman Catholic Bishop of Singapore, accompanied by two grave and demure-looking priests. These chattered like so many starved parroquets till nigh upon nightfall, and then Monseigneur and one priest departed, while the other remained, and I made the important discovery that this priest was going to be my fellow-passenger.

"Parlez-vous Français?" inquired the priest.

"Non, Signor, non intende," was my reply; for I was then as ignorant of French as a savage is of Latin grammar. He nodded his head, however, to a basket, and withdrawing therefrom a

bottle of Maraschino, he made me understand that we should partake of the same.

Now, this was sense, and a language that any man could understand; so we clinked our glasses together, and from this period became the best of bosom friends.

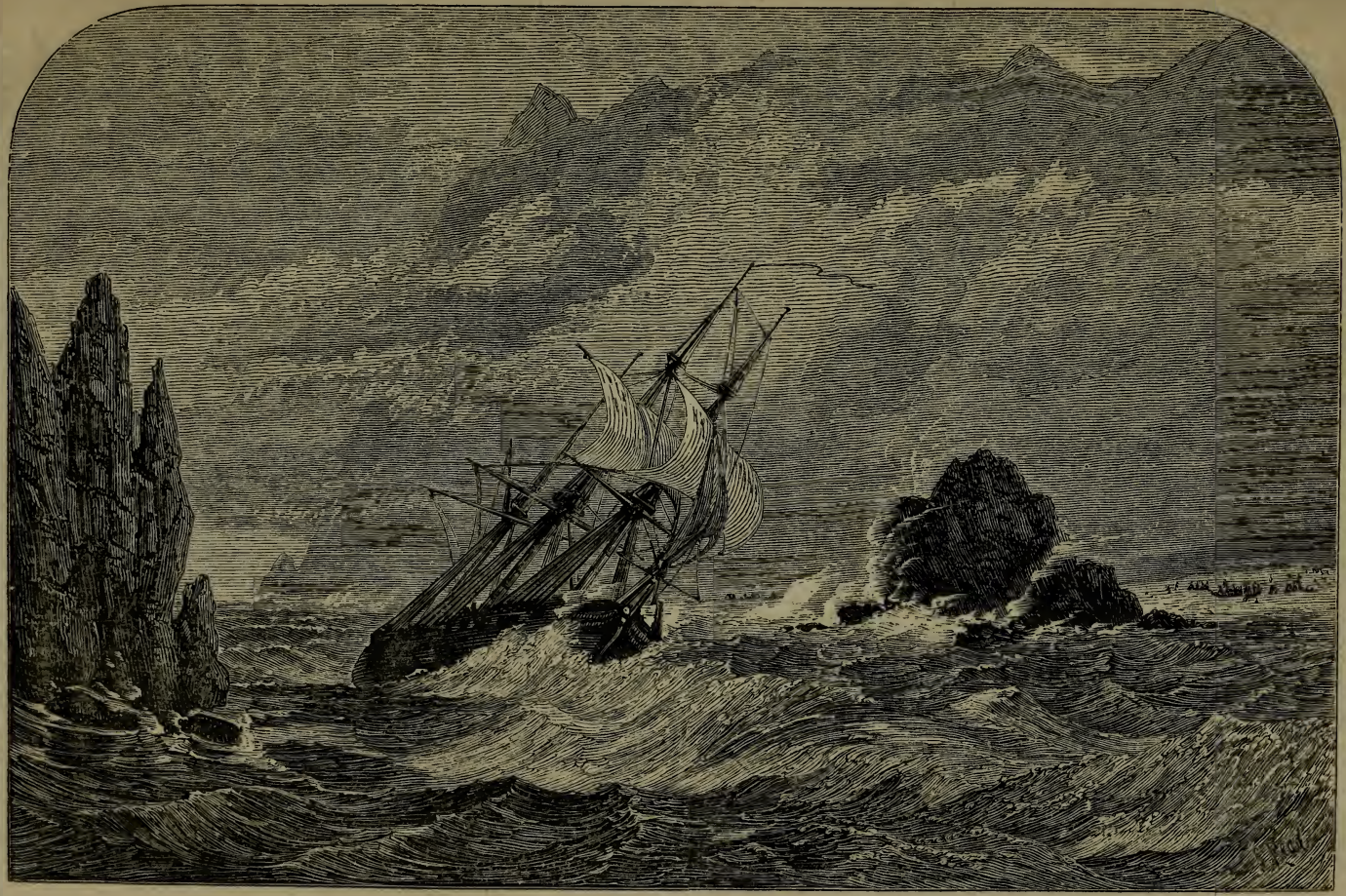
Sailors have a horror of priests and black cats, and it so happened that we had both these harmless creatures on board at starting. The cat, however, was soon flung overboard by the mate, and if he had not had a fear of judge and jury, the priest would certainly have followed the cat on some occasion, when a dark night and a favourable opportunity presented itself.

The next morning we weighed anchor and sailed through the Straits, passing along almost within stone-throw of the eastern shores. Pedro Blanco, a small rock in the middle of the channel was safely passed, and by night we were fairly launched into the China Seas. Whilst beating off Cape Romania, we experienced thick foggy weather and squalls, which rendered navigation perilous amongst the many islands and shoals with which these seas abound; at daylight, the morning after quitting Singapore, we had ample proof of the necessity of a wary watch being kept to look out for the hidden perils of the deep. Scudding before a squall under very light canvas, we discovered through the mist that surrounded us the dim outline of land not two hundred yards ahead, and upon which the surf was roaring and foaming in a most fearful manner: in putting the ship about, she missed stays, and we were all on the very threshold of perdition. The captain was as pale as a wintry moon, and as for the Lascars, they were rushing and tearing about like a posse of chickens that had just caught sight of a hawk, knocking over each other and everybody they met. The *Serang*, or chief boatswain, upset the poor Padre, and before he could recover his equilibrium he received grievous bodily injury, and was trodden nigh unto death. In this sad dilemma my poor skill in nautical matters was put to the test. I was then certainly what finished seamen would term a "lubber," and ever

afterwards I never pretended to great honours; but at that moment of peril I became inspired with a knowledge foreign to my intellect. With death staring me boldly in the face; with destruction painted in every billow, and complete extermination uttered by every foaming surge that spread far and wide around us; with echoing knells from every pierced rock and empty cavern, my cool self-possession never forsook me. I felt pre-assured that such a frightful death, such a torture amongst sharp-pointed flinty rocks and dashing pitiless spray was not then my destiny: and the poor clay, clad with a soul's radiancy, was not fated to become a merry feast for the hawk and the vulture, or the equally carnivorous sea-gulf.

Braced up and encouraged by such a presentiment, I took upon myself the command of the vessel, not directly but indirectly. I hinted to the captain the absolute necessity of trying to wear the ship; he followed my advice, but alas! even here the helm failed to command the impetuous progress towards destruction, and the command was given to let fly all but the spanker! The ship spun round like a top; and then hoisting up the fore-topsail and backing it, we floated past land and dangers, and by mid-day found that we had passed through Pulo Tiuggi and Pulo Aor, and setting all sails on the larboard tack, sighted and passed the high land of Tioman, steering as direct a course as we could for Pulo Obi, on the Eastern extremity of the gulf of Siam.

A day and a night, and half a day, we were spanking away under all available sail. Then came a little mizzling rain, and the glass was falling quickly, and everything around warned us of an approaching storm. It came before nightfall: first there was a dead calm, and the water was as smooth as a mill-pond; then a dark line upon the deep came as *avant-courier* of the tempest; bringing a mild heavenly breeze, invigorating one, and instilling fresh life after the sultry heat of the day; at intervals the wind became squally, and shifted all round the compass. From the heavy dark bank of clouds to the southward, we felt



BEATING OFF THE COAST OF CAMBOGIA.

well assured that a typhoon was raging in the China Seas; accordingly our best and safest plan was to keep, if possible, in the gulf, where the sea, being land-locked on several sides, afforded shelter to a certain extent. We worked tack-and-tack as the squalls shifted. Towards midnight the squalls became more violent, and kept on stiffening till they settled down into a gale; the gale became a hurricane, and the hurricane a tornado, that turned into a typhoon.

We had luckily but the fag-end of this terrific tornado, which, in one dark gloomy night, sent upwards of a thousand men to a sad grave in a fathomless deep. The "Golconda," bound from Singapore to China, with part of the 37th Regiment Madras Native Infantry, was supposed to have foundered on this very identical night; this much is certain, that she exchanged signals the previous day with a vessel bound for the Straits, and from that hour to this, neither stick, nor plank, nor any remnant of those brave and generous hearts that proudly throbbed in expectation of victory's brightest laurels, has ever come to light to let man know to what mysterious and fearful end those hapless people came, or how or where they found a troubled resting-place in those deep sullen waters beneath the wave, whose quiet, still repose, no storm has ever yet sought to disturb.

The night passed heavily; and roughly were we tossed from wave to wave. Then came the acmè of our troubles: long, long, before it reached us, had we seen the fiery lightning, darting fury from the sombre heavy clouds that hung in pinnacles upon a tempest-built bank. Then there was a murmuring like the distant voice of many waters that had burst from their bondage, and were now bearing down and carrying everything before them: borne on the wings of the gale, the thunder-clouds came rapidly spreading over us; flash followed upon flash of vivid sulphureous lightning, and in the short interval between each transparent flame of light, the vision was dimmed with an impenetrable black misty haze, too mysteriously awful for descriptive powers to depict. None remained on deck; every

stitch of canvas had long since been furled; the very helmsman, tottering with fear and consternation, backed the helm amidship, and fled precipitately below; and the vessel was left to the mercy of those elements which were then waging war like demons in their might. A dazzling, vivid, lingering stream of fiery light; a black and frightfully dark instant of suspense; an atmosphere charged with sulphureous smoke; and then there burst upon the ears one mighty and stupendous crash of dinning thunder more loud than all the world's artillery, and mines, and shells, and rockets could, combined, produce. The vessel shook and quivered like a timid bird, and one huge splinter from the shattered mainmast traversed the poop-bulwarks, imbedding itself as firmly in the cuddy lockers as ever did the strongest javelin, thrown by the mightiest arm of giant strength, into some sapling oak.

The storm was done. We had been flying till we had outsailed its circling bounds. The lightning had swept by, to heap destruction on the forest trees of the then still distant shores of Siam. And as morning broke the crew stole forth on deck to find the proud gay bark a wretched mastless wreck, with shrouds and cords, and booms and spars, and yards and masts scattered in every direction; some splintered into minute pieces; others towing overboard in heavy knotted masses; and the whole in such a state of entangled confusion as to be seemingly beyond the reach of hope or remedy to the inexperienced eyes of landsmen. Most fortunately, the whole succeeding day we were in a perfect calm. Axes, and cutlasses, and knives were hard at work, boats were lowered, the rigging and spars overboard secured, the parts on deck unrove, jury masts set up and firmly lashed, and so well did the old Serang and his Lascar crew work that day, that by evening we had two courses and a small driver rigged, and set two topgallant as topsails on studding-sail booms, which swung up and down, as the weather proved fair or foul; the decks were clean swept; the odds and ends of the wreck, bits of ropes, spars, &c. &c., all stowed under hatches;

and we were as comfortable and cozy on board as though nothing had happened, or no such thing as a typhoon existed.

Light winds and variable succeeded, with calms and weather sultry in the extreme : the tide set us to leeward, and if we made twenty miles one day, we lost thirty the next ; this was bad enough for two or three days, but when it continued for a week and upwards, it was enough to exhaust the patience of a saint. One or two of the water-casks which had been lashed on deck became leaky from the effects of the sun's fierce rays ; the planks on the deck began to start, the seams came uncaulked, the paint curled off the bulwarks, and the heat in the cabin was most stifling and appalling.

The captain lost all patience ; he swore at everything he could think of, from the cat to the priest. The gulf, he said, must be the dwelling-place of evil spirits, who had the power of tempting man to sin, and inducing him to swear against his own will. The cabin-boy and the cook bore the brunt of his ill-humour ; he buffeted the one because the cabin was hot and uncomfortable, and cuffed the other because the soup was cold and clammy. And woe betide the cat, or rather cats (for there were several of a different hue to the black one, which had met with an untimely end) ; woe betide the cats if he caught them pilfering. All the crew were immediately set to work to hunt out the two felons, and when caught, their two tails were lashed together with spun-yarn, so scientifically knotted, that nothing but the loss of the tails could separate them. In this wretched plight they were swung over a rope drawn taut for this express purpose, and there left to battle out the watch between themselves. Such a mawl-rowing, and growling, and spluttering, and spitting, and scratching, and biting, was never witnessed between two feline combatants. Each culprit presumed the other to be the immediate cause of the pain and suffering *entailed* upon it by its tail being cruelly squeezed and pinched, and sought mutual retribution for injuries received ; but Capt. C. was by no means innately a cruel man, and the moment his wrath was

diverted by seeing the cats suspended in this atrociously ludicrous method, and before they inflicted any serious injury on each other, he cut short the combat by cutting down the rope.

Twelve days elapsed from quitting Pulo Aor before we caught sight of land again, and then we were not much gratified by the land we sighted proving to be Pulo Obi or Ubi, on the south-western extremity of Cochin China. In one instance, however, it proved lucky and even gratifying ; it enabled us to procure a fresh supply of water and provisions, and afforded me an opportunity of visiting its little-frequented shores, and of having a whole day's rest on *terra firma*, pleasantly occupied in exploring a wild and singular land. A large Chinese junk lying at anchor was an excellent guide for us, and we brought up within a cable's length of it. The junk turned out to be an annual trader from Canton to Bangkok, and having experienced very rough treatment from the same typhoon in which we had been dismasted, had been compelled to run into the harbour of Pulo Obi, not only for water and provisions (which had been all washed overboard), but to procure if possible a new mat sail, the only one she had left being in a very tattered and wretched condition.

Pulo Obi is the resort of a few roguish Cochin Chinese, who have been exiled their country for various offences against the state. At the time that Crawfurd visited this island, there were only eight people residing upon it ; where we landed, there was a village of some thirty huts, containing about from ninety to one hundred inhabitants, and overrun with pigs, ducks, and fowls. Each head of a family possesses a tract of enclosed land, in which are grown yams, sweet potatoes, and a few other vegetables. Sailors of junks arriving from China eagerly barter tea, sweetmeats, birds'-nests, and other edibles, for live-stock and yams. Sailors of Siamese vessels barter rice, ghee, dholl, and other necessaries, for fresh vegetables and poultry ; so that these isolated beings subsist entirely upon the produce yielded by their fields and farm-yards, a small portion of which they them-

selves consume, and by disposing of the rest, furnish themselves with such requisites and luxuries as are not obtainable in the island itself. They appeared to me to be very merry over their misfortunes, and from being of late years often brought in contact with the crews and captains of all the vessels trading with Siam, evinced no fear or suspicion of strangers, and only tried, as most orientals usually do, to get as much out of them as they possibly could.

Our progress from Pulo Obi towards Siam was slow indeed; we seldom made more than thirty miles during the twenty-four hours. The days were hot and oppressive in the extreme; the

ANCHORAGE OFF THE BAR OF SIAM.

nights poured with rain. One very wet night the captain was on deck, and drenched to the skin, and in no very amiable humour. Our stock of ducks, on the contrary, were in the greatest imaginable state of enjoyment, and evinced their perfect satisfaction at the state of the weather by repeated loud quackings, sometimes so noisy that the captain was unable to make himself understood. At length his patience was utterly

exhausted, and he ordered the cook to watch for the ducks that made most noise, and slaughter them *instanter*. The cook obeyed the injunctions given him to the letter, and next morning not a single live duck was to be seen. The victims were salted, and we were compelled to subsist on them during the remainder of our long and tedious voyage.

Forty-two days had elapsed since our departure from Singapore, when we at last sighted Siam; and then all we could see of it was a few Chinese fishing-stakes, a long low range of mangrove bushes in the distance, and mountains.

CHAPTER II.

Paknam.—Arrival of ship reported, and permission requested to enter and proceed up the river.—Consequences of not complying with this rule.—Proceed up the river Menam.—Description of Paknam.—Its fortress.—Siamese King's permission to all the world to dine.—Paknam villagers.—Incident with the natives.—Punishment of priests, &c., for an attack on the English.—Paknam houses.—The Government-house.—Siamese ladies.—Description of the Menam.—Scenery.—Birds.—Native canals.—Paklat Boon.—Dockyards.—First sight of Bangkok.—American missionaries.—Appearance of Bangkok in the morning.—Junks.—Description of houses.—Accident to one.—Population of Bangkok.—Fall into the river.—Mr. Hunter.—Order from Prince Chou Faa to cast a cannon.—Tombs—Prisons.—Markets.—Annoyance from Crows.—Siamese aversion to walking.—Mode of passing the day among the residents of Siam.—Account of the French Missions.

SHORTLY after we had anchored off the bar of Siam, the Captain went on shore to report to the authorities at Paknam, a little town situated at the mouth of the river "Menam," (which latter word signifies in Siamese the "Mother of Waters,") the arrival of his ship, and to obtain from the Siamese Government permission for the vessel to enter and proceed up the river as far as Bangkok, the modern capital of Siam. This is a form strictly to be adhered to; for the penalty inflicted upon such as neglect it, and enter the river without this authority, is the seizure of the vessel, the confiscation

of the cargo, the imprisonment of the captain, (a very terrible penalty in such a country, and in such prisons as it possesses,) and the immediate execution of the Siamese pilot for an infringement of the laws of the "Brother of the Moon, and worshipper of the two White Elephants." Since, however, strange vessels never would venture to cross the bar without a pilot, and those acquainted with the trade know the necessary forms to be gone through, the threat is seldom, if ever, put into execution, excepting, perhaps, in occasional instances of small Chinese junks, which being ignorant of the law, and drawing only a few feet water, have passed in and been seized.

After a day's delay, the captain returned with the requisite permit, and accompanied by a pilot; and soon after we weighed anchor, and proceeded towards the mouth of the river. But, however good a helmsman our pilot may have been, he grievously lacked the very necessary knowledge of the ebb and flow of the tides; and after thumping the ship several times violently on the bar, there we stuck, with no prospect or hope of getting out of this position for at least twenty hours. The tide ebbed fast, and as it ebbed, the vessel lay heavily over on her broadside, till her position became so very unpleasant that we could neither stand nor walk, and eventually were compelled to seek refuge on the outside of the outer bulwarks. The position of the vessel caused havoc amongst the bottles and crockery-ware in the cabin, and the pilot came in for a pretty round tirade of abuse from all hands on board.

There is a remarkable phenomenon to be observed on this bar, which is, that though its distance is fully a mile from the Menam, yet, when the tide flows out again from the river, the water alongside the vessel is perfectly sweet and drinkable.

The tide had completely ebbed off the bank before it commenced to rise slowly again; and in this interval we slid down by means of rope ladders, and had no small amusement in picking up the little fish and prawns which had been left, much

I should think to their surprise, high and dry, floundering about in an element very foreign to their nature. As the tide returned, so we drew nearer to the vessel; but it came up faster than many of us imagined, and notwithstanding our hurry and haste to scramble up the side of the vessel again, not a few of us got wet feet in the attempt.

It was not till 10 p.m., that I could hope for any ease or comfort in my bed, owing to the curious position that the vessel was in, and when she did right again, I was very glad to feel myself standing in an upright position. At break of day, next morning, there was sufficient water for us to proceed, and being favoured by a gentle sea-breeze, it was not long before we entered the magnificent river, and came to an anchor off the small town of Paknam.

Paknam is one of the most extraordinarily picturesque spots upon the face of the earth. It is like a miniature view of an immense citadel, or a panoramic exhibition of the Boga Tigris.

FORTRESS AT PAKNAM.

On a diminutive little island in the exact centre of the river rises a diminutive little white circular fortress, with a very small, but beautifully constructed, Pagoda towering up to a

pigmy height in the middle thereof. The absurd notion of erecting such a thing with the design of instilling terror into their enemies could never have entered the heads of any other nation than the Siamese, or their celestial brethren. A broadside of ship's biscuits would almost annihilate it. Yet this jim-crack little toy is firmly believed by the king and nation to spread terror far and wide, and to be the dread of the English Government, and the only reason why they have never attempted to attack this, as they have all the neighbouring countries. Of course, there is a legend attached to this fort, some story about its having been founded by a Siamese deity, who still keeps watch over the welfare of its worshippers. On either bank of the river there is a long range of buttress, badly constructed and worse mounted ; indeed, many of the guns were so corroded with rust, that it would have been a dangerous experiment to attempt to fire them off. From these fortresses, an ordinary sized ship's cable is stretched across in times of alarm and danger ; and thus protected, the Siamese presume their country to be impregnable. Hence, every day, at about 1 p. m., the notes of a discordant horn resound through every town and village in the Siamese territories, meant to proclaim to the world at large, "that his Majesty, the King of Siam, had had his dinner, and was graciously pleased to grant permission to all other potentates on the face of the earth to follow his judicious example." A Siamese would no more believe that any other crowned head dared transgress this law with impunity, than he would in the existence of an electric telegraph ; and as for breaking through it themselves, instantaneous death would be the result.

We landed at Paknam, to take a look at the village and its inhabitants. The ground was swampy in the extreme, and elevated pathways constructed of lime and mortar were an indispensable requisite. These pathways were not over and above broad, and the Siamese not very polite, so that, in passing to and fro, they jostled us and each other in the rudest manner, and

occasionally some unhappy individual was edged off the road, and disappeared amidst the mud and marshes of the quagmire. Such an incident occurring to any of our party would have occasioned very serious inconvenience, as we were all dressed in white, with shoes and stockings *à la Franka*. Not so the Siamese, (whose simplicity of costume will be commented upon in due order,) who, running to the river, would plunge right in, swim some twenty yards and back, and with dripping wet garments pursue their avocations with all the *sang froid* imaginable. In the mud, and all around, were numbers of pigs in the full enjoyment of their dirty element; and little cleaner than themselves were the groups of village children that chased them from spot to spot with fiendish delight. Little flotillas of ducks were swimming in puddles and ditches, and there was apparently no want of any kind of poultry. The villagers themselves were about as cut-throat a set as ever I set eyes on, both men and women, and as we passed, they said something or other in Siamese, which might have been a welcome, or a malediction, for all I cared or knew. Judging from their aspects, I am inclined to think they were cursing us, the more especially as they owed the English a grudge for the sound example that had been made of them, not many years before my visit, for maltreating two British subjects that were amusing themselves by shooting wild pigeons in the vicinity of their temple, or watt. The story was this. Mr. Hunter, a gentleman for many years resident in Siam, and who had the esteem and regard of all the better portion of the inhabitants at Bangkok, his Majesty the King included, was very fond of fishing and shooting, the two only amusements afforded to such as become voluntary exiles, and take up their abode in these little civilised parts. For the better accommodation of himself and his friends, Mr. Hunter had purchased a beautiful little cutter of about 25 tons burthen, in which many and many a time I afterwards accompanied him on exploring trips outside the bar, and amongst the numberless little islands that line the sea coast. In the instance alluded to,

he had made up a pleasure trip, which was to extend, I believe, as far as "*Chantiboon*" and back. Arriving at Paknam about mid-day, and the tide and wind not favouring, Mr. Hunter determined to land there, and see what sport he and his companion (the master of an English vessel) could get by shooting wild-pigeons, which were very plentiful about the neighbourhood of the *watt*, where, on the pinnacles of its lofty pagodas, they were wont to build their nests and rear their young. Great success attended the sportsmen, when (just as they were about to return to the cutter) some twenty infuriated priests set upon the pair, armed with murderous clubs, and beat and otherwise maltreated them most unmercifully: the whole populace rose upon these two defenceless Britons, who, nevertheless, fighting back to back, managed to keep numbers of the assailants off, till, attracted by the noise and riot on shore, the crew of a Portuguese brig, then lying at the mouth of the Menam came to their timely rescue, and got them on board the cutter more dead than alive. Mr. Hunter immediately got under weigh, and wind and tide favouring, proceeded back to Bangkok, where he and his companion immediately on their arrival presented themselves at the palace, and demanded and obtained an immediate interview. The king was highly exasperated at the conduct of the people at Paknam, had the governor and chiefs bastinadoed most cruelly, and caused the whole bevy of priests to be expelled from the watt, and exiled as felons into the interior of the country, where their occupation to this day, if they are still alive, is to cut grass for the white elephants that are kept in such grand state, and so much reverenced, by the inhabitants of Bangkok and all Siam.

The houses at Paknam were miserably dirty, constructed of mud and wood, and, as is the case in the Malayan peninsula the upper story only tenantable, the lower one being the abode of pigs, fowls, ducks, dogs, cats, and, I imagine, not a few snakes. The Government House had been built originally of stone; some of the walls were still of this material, but the rest was rudely

patched up with firewood and mud. It was the only house at Paknam into which you entered before mounting up stairs, and had rooms both in the upper and lower story. The reason of this was, that the Governor being the head man, and greater than the rest of the villagers, it was no shame for others to pass under his abode; for a strong prejudice exists in Siam against passing under any man's abode that is not immensely your superior, a prejudice which I shall hereafter endeavour to account for, and from this cause all the other houses had ladders placed outside. As in Sumatra, the people preferred elevated positions, for two very sensible reasons—the first was, to protect them from the stings of venomous reptiles, with which the whole country abounds; the second, that the cool sea breezes might have free access to their couches, and help to drive away the swarms of musquitoes that literally drive one to the verge of insanity by their sharp malignant stings. The interior of Government House was anything but prepossessing; a wretchedly planked room, with an old dingy carpet, and a few smoke-dried cushions to recline against. As for the Governor himself, he was a burly overfed Siamese, with a husky voice, and an inquisitive eye. His questions were mainly of a selfish nature. He asked me, through the interpreter, if I had ever seen such fortresses, or such a town as the one he had the honour to command? I replied, with all truth and sincerity, that I never had. "Ah, then," said the Governor, "wait till you get to the capital, and then you will see (and here he paused, and covered his eyes with his hands as though the mere reflection were sufficient to blind him with its dazzling glory)—you *will* see something that will astonish you far more than even the Emperor of China's rich capital would." The next thing he wanted to know was, whether I was a doctor or not, and on my replying in the negative, he evinced much delight, declaring all doctors to be ignorant men, who made people swallow abominable filth, whilst they themselves lived on the fat of the land. His own had restricted him the use of ardent spirits, and he said the result was, that he was very ill and

dying. He suffered from a constitutional stomach-ache, effectually to cure which he begged very hard for two bottles of English brandy, offering to give us a small detachment of chickens and ducks in return. During our interview, the ladies of his household were amusing themselves by peeping through eyelet-holes, made expressly in a large sail that curtained off the audience hall from their department. They made no secret of their vicinity, for they laughed and talked as loudly as though they were in the same room, and I make little doubt their comments would have been rather disagreeable, had we been able to appreciate their pith and aptitude. As the case stood, however, we were perfectly innocent on this score, and in this instance at least, ignorance was bliss indeed. Taking leave of his Excellency, we returned on board, heartily glad to be enabled to exchange the filth and abomination of that wretched little town for the comfortable clean decks of our own little floating world, small and confined though its limits necessarily were. After tea and a promenade on deck, the tide began to favour us, and the moon rose in all the majesty of her pale glory, to be a beacon light to guide us through the intricate navigation of the river ; the wind was a mere zephyr, but it served to puff and swell out the tiny loftier sails, with sufficient force to urge our little bark on her onward way ; sometimes it was right aft, and sometimes right ahead, now on the lee bow, now on the starboard, according as the windings of the river caused the vessel to sport with its invisible playmate.

So deep is the Menam and so void of shoals and banks, that, as we worked tack and tack up certain portions of the river, the bowsprit of the vessel got fairly entangled amongst the mangrove bushes, and tore away twigs and even boughs in disentangling herself again ; and as these bushes waved gently to and fro as the night breeze swept over them, nothing could be more magnificent than the aspect they presented, thickly bestudded as they were with myriads of glittering fire-flies that ever and anon sparkled forth from the black obscure shade of the bushes, throwing upon the

water and all around one bright transcendant glow of radiant light. This was the sentimental part of the scenery, for on the other hand we were beset by perfect clouds of mosquitoes, whose perpetual dinning drowsy hum was only to be rivalled by the acute sharpness of their venomous stings. I sought refuge under the mosquito gauze, only to find that scores of these vile insects had already found their way there; and being locked in with such an enemy was even worse than facing them in an open field; but as the night advanced these wretches betook themselves to the shore, and gave us a few hours of peace and tranquillity. Whilst endeavouring to fall asleep, I was surprised to hear what I supposed to be the beating of a native drum or "*Tom Tom*," apparently close alongside the vessel; and yet, to my certain knowledge from ocular demonstration, no human habitation existed within many miles of where we were then sailing; the ground being on either side of the river, as far as the eye could reach, a swamp unfit even for the cultivation of rice, and which was continually being subjected to inundations of the river. This noise arose, as I afterwards learned, from a species of fish that followed in the wake of the vessel, and which from this circumstance (I mean the noise they make) are termed by the Siamese the *Drum Fish*. I saw some specimens of them afterwards in Bangkok: they are very ugly, with a species of bladder under the throat, (from which the curious sound is emitted,) and wholly unfit for food. Towards morning we approached the second town, constructed on the banks of the Menam, after entering the river. This is called Paklat Belo or Little Paklat, to distinguish it from Paklat Boon, a large and more considerable town some twenty miles further up the river. Paklat Belo is, strictly speaking, nothing more than a village; in fact, not so large as many of the villages in the vicinity; but it is a place of some consideration, from the fact that the neighbouring land on either side of the river is laid out in vast paddy fields as far as the eye can reach, and the rice produced is here shipped and carried to Bangkok and Yuthia for the con-

sumption of the inhabitants. Here the eye first observes signs of cultivation, and here also commences that busy scene of life which goes on thickening and increasing as you draw near to the capital. Boats laden with every kind of marketable produce now make their appearance. This is the utmost limit of the floating vendor's boats; they come down with a favouring tide, so that no manual labour is required to urge the well-stocked canoes from village to village along the shores of the river: hence it arises that one seldom sees more than one individual in charge of a canoe, and their only duty consists in skilfully steering the

PAKLAT BELO.

boat, which the stream rapidly carries whichever way it may chance to set. These canoes are piled up in a manner that would lead one uninitiated in the art of skulling to imagine their safe guidance through the waters to be a moral impossibility; yet such is the facility which practice gives to these almost amphibious people, that the canoes are generally entrusted to the care of a child not above ten years of age, and that child a girl. Accidents are very rare indeed, and this indeed is perfectly

marvellous, considering the thousands of larger and paddled canoes that are perpetually plying to and fro, and which, in some sudden bend of the river, hidden from each other by mangrove bushes, come sharply round the corner, threatening instant destruction to the smaller and more humble boat of the vendor of fish, fruits, or vegetables. From Paklat Belo there is a canal which is navigable at high water to canoes paddled by as many as eight men ; and this canal leads direct into the very heart of the city of Bangkok, cutting off a distance of nearly twenty-five miles. Proceeding from Paklat Belo, we gradually came upon a higher and more richly cultivated country : pretty little hamlets and villages were scattered over the plain in the distance, and in some parts the country was thickly studded with beautiful fruit trees ; their dark foliage contrasting well with the lighter and more brilliant green of the country around. One curve in the river would bring us in sight of the tall and graceful sugar-cane waving to and fro as the wind sighed enviously through its foliage. No bee, however cunning, could hope to suck sweetness from its coarsely covered canes—no one but man possessed the secret of the rich sweetness well concealed beneath its rough unseemly bark—and none but man knew how to squeeze the juice ; and, in short, not to be too sentimental, play the deuce with it by melting, boiling, skimming, and many other cunning processes, and so produce the sugar-rum and sugar-candy. One stout old Chinaman, who was ordering about some labourers, seemed evidently to possess the secret : he *did look* so happy and so fatly contented. A second curve in the river, and nothing but betlenut plantations on either side ; a third, and innumerable fruit gardens sprung up to view ; and so the scene went varying from beautiful to most lovely, and from most lovely to charming, as we spanned that river's waters, mile by mile. About mid-day we reached Paklat Boon, and the tide being against us brought up for that evening and went on shore to have a ramble.

Paklat Boon is very prettily situated. Close to the water's edge are the neatly built cottages of the artificers and others

employed in the construction of canoes, and at the time of our visit there was a state canoe being constructed for his Majesty, of a length not less than from seventy to eighty feet, whilst its greatest beam did not exceed twelve. The dockyards are kept in excellent order, and the whole town is neat and cleanly—rather a marvellous fact in these parts, and one solely attributable to the place being under the immediate supervision of Prenawi

PAKLAT BOON.

Consitt, a member of the royal family, and Lord High Admiral of the Siamese navy. He is a perfect European in manners, and speaks English fluently, and has adopted the manners and customs and tastes of our country. The little houses in the central part of the town were principally occupied by husbandmen and farmers. Each house was detached, and had a garden containing trees yielding the most luscious fruits in the East, and many rare and beautiful flowers. "Well," thought I, on

returning on board after a long and agreeable stroll, "matters are not so bad after all, and if they go on mending at this rate, the prediction of the old Governor of Paknam is in a fair way of being verified to a certain extent."

Weighing from hence we proceeded up the river towards Bangkok. Truly the Menam is a splendid river, and well may the natives call it the "Mother of Waters!" The further we progressed the more magnificent the river became, and in some parts it was a perfect lake, without a rock, or bank, an eddy, or any hidden harm to cause the mariner one moment's anxiety or alarm. The ship worked tack and tack and ran her bowsprit into the mangrove bushes on either side, to the no small alarm and dismay of troops of monkeys that were skylarking amongst the trees on the banks of the river. The further we went the more interesting the scene became; the water was literally dotted with vessels and boats of all descriptions and sizes, ships, barques, brigs, schooners, cutters, junks, proahs, and canoes of every description and size. We were continually being hailed by the little vendors of divers goods, as they skulled their canoes skilfully under the stern of our vessel. Some sold fish, others fruits, others again vegetables, and there were a whole fleet of vendors of butcher's meat and of bread, screaming, at the utmost pitch of their little voices, laudatory encomiums of their different meats, each vowing her own (for the canoes are navigated by girls) was infinitely better to that sold by the rest of the lot. There was one old Chinaman who had hit upon a stratagem which seemed to promise fairly to recompense him for his trouble. He had erected in the centre of his canoe a cooking apparatus, and he ladled out into cups of very goodly dimensions a by no means contemptible-looking soup, commonly known in China as "Chou-chou," which consists of a mixture of every kind of meat and vegetables that the earth produces, boiled down into a kind of jelly and seasoned with pepper and salt; he had more custom than all the rest put together. Philosophical-looking old fishermen who had spent the night in fishing, and had caught nothing,

seemed by their faces to declare that they had determined in their own minds not to go to the expense of such a luxury that day; but it was a frail resolution, and made only to be broken, for no sooner did the much-loved fragrance reach their expanded nostrils, than they bid adieu to all stoicism, and rowed as fast as they could after the vendor of "chou-chou."

Evening was just closing in as we passed the dockyards of Bangkok, which are situated three miles below the city itself. Here those splendid ships which compose the King of Siam's navy, and which would do credit to any nation, were constructed, under the immediate supervision of an English shipwright; and here vessels of any other nation, that may have met with damage at sea, are thoroughly, and at a very cheap outlay, repaired. There are also one or two dry docks; and on the whole, the establishment is an admirable one, and well suited to render services to any vessels meeting with misfortunes in the China seas. In the hands of our Government they would become invaluable, and yield a revenue far surpassing that yielded by similar establishments in other countries: but of this anon. After rounding the dockyards, we passed the Roman Catholic Mission establishment, a very unpresuming-looking place indeed, with a little chapel where the well-known cross, that brings peace and comfort to the Christian's soul, rose up unpretendingly amidst the surrounding magnificent symbols of Paganism and idolatry. Yet another tack, and one more turning in the river, and lo! the glories of the floating city burst upon our admiring gaze, like some resplendent ray of sunlight through an envious cloud. It was night—dark night; neither moon nor stars were in the heavens. But what cared Bangkok, with its million globes that lighted the river's broad surface from side to side, for night or darkness! It was like that fairy-land where houris dwell, whose eyes shed lustre—lustre such as made the stars decline to keep their wary watch, and Madame Moon to hide her face behind a silvery cloud. As far as the eye could reach, on either side of the river, there was one

endless succession of lights—lights variegated, and of every imaginable colour and shape, and such only as Chinese ingenuity could ever invent; every little floating house had two or more of these lights; the yards and masts of the vessels and junks (and these were by no means few) were decorated in a like manner; the lofty pagodas or minarets of the watts were one blaze of light. It was the most striking, the most beautiful panorama I had ever witnessed: nor, had we been a day later, should I have enjoyed the spectacle, for the night of our arrival chanced to be that of one of the greatest feast-days in China—the feast of lanterns. The tide was now setting against us; and although the distance to our proper anchorage off the British factory was trivial and easy of accomplishment, the captain was afraid of getting entangled with some of the many craft lying in the river, and so dropped anchor just opposite the Portuguese Consulate, where also resided a board of American missionaries—a regular set of Jonathans—who came off immediately, and commenced guessing and calculating to an extent that would "whip spiders into a bale of silk," and which completely destroyed the illusion of the magnificent view I had been enjoying.

"I guess, Cap'en, you got some crackers aboard for my wife? They came all the way from Carolina, and I'll thank you to give 'em up."

"Who the —— (he very nearly went the whole extent) are you?" exclaimed the blunt old skipper; "and what are ye, to think that I'm going to look after your crackers at this time of night, and with the vessel swinging-to."

"I'll write to *the Board*, Capting," snuffled the enraged Yankee, "and it will be quite a long day before you bring any more crackers, or any other cargo, for us missionaries—quite a long day, I guess:" and repeatedly murmuring this to himself, he, uninvited, took a seat, and allowed his wrath to calm down in the contemplation of the good cheer spread on the cuddy-table. Many of these gentlemen were celebrated for the like cool

proceedings. One man, Brother O——, a tall lank specimen of humanity clad in seedy black, (so tall that he might have been twin-brother, for aught I know to the contrary, to the celebrated American who labours under this inconvenience to such an extent as to be obliged to climb up a ladder every morning to shave himself,) betook himself, wife, children, bags, baggage, and all, on board of the W. S. Hamilton, an English vessel, on the point of sailing for Singapore and Liverpool, without any previous intimation of his intentions to the captain, or any soul on board. The captain, who was entertaining a select party of friends at a farewell champagne dinner, and who, with the rest, had partaken freely of that enlivening beverage, was quite *taken aback*, as he himself expressed it, at the sudden and unexpected apparition, but cheerfully invited the new comers to be seated at the festive board. Brother O—— stalked unceremoniously past the table, without deigning to notice any one in the room, until he had gained the door of the stern cabin, which having surveyed with an approving glance, and casting a look in which horror, contempt, and pity were admirably mingled, on the *devilish crew* imbibing strong drinks, broke forth into the following queries, with an unmistakeable tone of command.

Yankee: "Capting! you are going to Singapore!"

Captain (in amazement): "I am, sir."

Yankee: "And you go right away after sundown?"

Captain (coolly): "Perhaps yes; perhaps no."

Yankee (more coolly still): "Well, I guess I'll take this cabin for me and my partner and the precious children. We'll put our boxes here and our beds there. We'll eat in our cabin because we abhor winebibbers who have red eyes"——a pause —"and, Capting! when we get to Singapore I'll give you thirty dollars!" (very loud and emphatically.)

It is needless to say that, notwithstanding this overwhelming offer, (which was just about one-fifth of the ordinary passage money for a single individual,) Brother O—— was, much to his surprise, quietly requested to proceed on shore; and he went

over the ship's side foaming with indignation, and making use of the invariable Yankee-missionary threat of *writing to the Board.* One would have imagined that the Board was composed of the most powerful and awful despots in the universe, judging by the many direful threats held out of appealing thereto ; whereas its amiable members consist principally of tender-hearted old maiden ladies, whose names and places of residence may be seen any day in the list of charitable contributors appended to the annually published reports, with the nature of the contributions set opposite to their names, which not unfrequently consist of articles as little suited to the climate and people they are destined for, as the flannel waistcoats were, which (as we read in "Pickwick") so much excited the elder Mr. Weller's indignation.

As morning broke, we, who had been anxiously waiting on deck an hour before, gradually discovered the different marks and headlands of the surrounding country. One or two solitary glimmerings were left, sole remnants of the last night's grand display of lanterns, and the intense silence that reigned around sadly contrasted with the noisy mirth and music of the preceding evening. The town looks as a supper-room does the morning after a ball ; there was nothing left of the feast save the odds and ends ; jellies had melted to nauseous-looking water, and gaily-ornamented cakes crumbled into indescribable pieces of nastiness. So it was with Bangkok, as the first light of morning enabled us to obtain an obscure glimpse of the long range of floating houses that lined the river on either side. By *night* they looked gaudy enough and sufficiently brilliant in our uninitiated imagination to have risen up into stately palaces, glittering with the golden light of the sun's early ray ; in the *morning* they appeared a nondescript confusion of cabins, pagodas, junks, canoes, vessels, fishing-boats, rafters, and rafts, and heavy-looking piles of bamboo and timber. As the sun cleared the atmosphere, however, things assumed a pleasanter aspect ; and by the time that we were fairly under weigh, and

working towards the anchorage, the whole city of Bangkok, consisting of a long double, and in some parts treble, row of neatly and tastefully-painted wooden cabins, floating on thick bamboo rafts, and linked to each other in parcels of six or seven houses by chains, (which chains were fastened to huge poles driven into the bed of the river,) rose like a magic picture to our admiring gaze. Junks of 1400 tons were lying close alongside these floating cabins—so close, that they could converse with each other with the greatest facility; and one vessel—a Portuguese that was working tack and tack with us up the river—approached so close to the houses, that, in going about, she came foul with, and carried away with her, half-a-dozen of these floating domiciles. The tide was running down rapidly, and so soon as the brig disentangled herself, away went these houses at a steamer's pace, amidst the vociferous hootings and shoutings of their tenants; and before many minutes had elapsed, they had disappeared round a corner of the river, and were stranded on the opposite shore; but they sustained no great injury, for, with the simple difference that their dislodgement was involuntary, this was after all nothing but the method adopted by the natives themselves when desirous of changing the position of their shops. If the air of the "Fleet-street" of Siam does not agree with Mrs. Yow-chow-fow and her children, or they wish to obtain a more aristocratic footing by being domiciled higher up and nearer to the King's palace, *then* all they have to do is to wait till the tide serves, and loosing from their moorings, float gently up towards the spot they wish to occupy. On such occasions the men are armed with long bamboo poles, to keep their houses from coming in contact with any of the many vessels that are at anchor in the river; and every soul on board every ship and every one within hail halloo and scream to each other in a most appalling manner, leading a stranger to imagine that the interests of the state must be at stake, and dependent entirely on the safe navigation of that one small floating house.

Bangkok, the modern capital of Siam, and the seat of the

Siamese Government, was computed, at the period of my residence there, to consist of seventy thousand floating houses or shops; and each shop, taking one with another, to contain five individuals, including men, women, and children; making the population amount to 350,000 souls of which number 70,000

THE FLOATING CITY—BANGKOK.

are Chinese, 20,000 Burmese, 20,000 Arabs and Indians; the remainder, or about 240,000, being Siamese. This was the best census we could take, and I believe it to be nearly accurate. The situation is exceedingly picturesque. I was told that when the Siamese relinquished the ancient capital of Yuthia, and first established the throne at Bangkok, the houses were built upon the banks of the river itself; but the frequent recurrence of the cholera induced one of the kings to insist upon the inhabitants living upon the water, on the supposition that their dwellings

would be more cleanly, and consequently the inmates less subjected to the baneful effects of that scourge of the East. This is a remarkable fact, that an uneducated, nay uncivilised barbarian, should have entertained such notions as to the conduciveness of cleanliness to health and vigour; but alas! so slothful are the people—so frightfully indifferent to their own interests and health—that, although with very slight exertion their cabins or floating houses might be scrubbed and scoured out every morning, they are seldom even so much as swept. There is another and a great disadvantage to which this system has exposed the inhabitants; it is this—cattle, dogs, cats, nay even sometimes human bodies, that have been cast into or been drowned in the river higher up on the Yuthia side, are perpetually being swept down by the current, and getting entangled underneath the houses amidst the bamboo or poles that moor them; the inmates as well as neighbours are assailed with pestilential odours, which they have no possible means of ridding themselves of; and they have no alternative but to abide patiently till time and tide carry away this nuisance, being subjected in the interval to a local miasma quite sufficient to breed typhus in a malignant form. Another inconvenience is, that these houses, being so little elevated above the water's edge, are necessarily damp and humid, and consequently rheumatic fevers are extremely prevalent during the monsoons. Mr. Hunter's floating house was double the size of any of the others, very neatly painted, and well-furnished, with a nice little verandah in front. The first night of my arrival I was dining there with all the English and Portuguese then assembled at Bangkok; we dined late, by candlelight, and after dinner, walking up and down the verandah chatting about many little affairs, and the latest news, &c., I got so absorbed in the theme of conversation as literally to forget that I was still upon the water; and taking one step too much, found myself all of a sudden up to my neck in water, with the tide running so strong, that I lost hold of one of the wooden pillars of the verandah; and though I am by no means a bad

swimmer, I should inevitably have been drowned that night by being drawn right under the houses, if assistance had not come.

Mr. Hunter, the identical gentleman that brought home the Siamese twins, had, after a great deal of difficulty and persuasion, induced the Siamese Government to permit the Europeans residing at Bangkok to build houses on *terra firma*. The Portuguese consul, Signor Marsinello de Rosa, the French bishop and missionaries, the Americans and Mr. Hunter, had all gladly availed themselves of this permission. Mr. Hunter's was a very fine large prominent house, opposite to which the British ensign proudly floated on feast days and high days, and here every stranger found a home, for a very prince of hospitality was Mr. Hunter, as was also his young partner, Mr. Hayes. When I first arrived at Bangkok the building was not completed; it was, however, speedily finished, and we entered into possession. Soon afterwards I got my commission in the Siamese service as a naval and military officer at the same time ; a curious amalgamation of occupations, and one which was sometimes rather perplexing to myself, but the Siamese suppose that Englishmen know everything, and are *au fait* at every calling. The day after I joined the *Caledonia*, a forty-four gun ship belonging to the King, in my capacity as first lieutenant, and whilst giving the necessary instruction to Messrs. Eglan and Rogers, my two juniors, as to getting up and setting the rigging, and making other necessary preparations for sea, one of the state barges came alongside with a request from the Prince Chou-Faa, the heir apparent to the throne, that I would attend instantly at his palace. On arriving at the palace, I found to my utter amazement that I had been sent for to cast a cannon for the Prince ! ! ! It was long before I could persuade his highness that I was utterly incapable of undertaking such an office, and yet the Prince was by no means a man deficient in common sense and education, as my reader will perceive further on in the work. One day I was busy on board ; another I was with the cavalry four or five miles in the interior ; a third, occupied in drilling the Prince's own private

body guard; a fourth, doing a little pioneering work; and so we rang the changes on the army and navy each week-day.

Before Mr. Hunter gained permission for Europeans to build on the banks of the Menam, this privilege was entirely confined to the members of the royal family, and for the building of watts, or places of worship. The pagodas that tower up from these watts are of very magnificent workmanship, being a mosaic of the finest porcelain, inlaid with ivory, gold and silver, and the effect when the sun is shining upon them is perfectly dazzling. After the watts, what strikes the stranger's attention are three very lofty pillars, peculiarly and entirely inlaid with variegated stones, some of which I was given to understand were of

MR HUNTER'S HOUSE

immense value. These are the tombs of the three greatest kings of Siam; men who had done mighty deeds of valour at the period when the Burmese and the Siamese were at war. The

king's palace itself towers high up in the air, and next in order comes the palace and fortress of the Prince Chou-Faa.

Next door to Mr. Hunter were the domiciles of some seven or eight American missionaries and their families, and next door to them the Roman Catholic chapel, a small but neat building, in which mass was regularly performed by one or more of the missionaries. Three miles, however, down the river, and on the opposite bank, were the Portuguese Consulate, another set of American missionaries, the mission burial-ground, and the habitations of the French bishop and his clergy. The missionaries on our side were at warfare with those on the opposite bank regarding certain points of Church doctrine, but as they were all supported by one society they were compelled to have a board meeting once a month, to draw up reports and send in their drafts for monthly pay; here violent controversies would ensue, which generally ended in a flood of tears and a hugging match all round.

The public prisons are like so many bird-cages suspended over the water; here debtors, like so many sparrows, keep hopping from one side to the other, as the shade shifts, and they are dependent upon the charity of passers-by for what they get to eat and drink. Women of notoriously ill fame are also similarly confined, with this difference, that their cages are on the rafts next to the banks of the river, so as to be hidden from the public gaze. The immoralities practised here, with the consent and to the advantage of Government, who derive a revenue therefrom, are too frightful to be attended to.

Every house in the front tier is a bazaar, and in these bazaars are exposed for sale every imaginable article, the conjoint produce of India, China, the Straits, and even Liverpool. The men do not hesitate to expose, amongst other vendible articles, their *own daughters*, who may be considered to rank as a species of bale goods, and are often sold at less value than a piece of long cloth, or a gaily-coloured chintz, the only difference in the bargain being that should the purchaser quit the capital he

must restore the girl, together with another sum of money equivalent to the original cost price, and so much a head for every child she may bring back with her on her return to the bosom of her affectionate family. This clause is enforced simply because the laws of the country demand it, for, of course, no affection can exist between the parent and child. Astounding as this must appear to the ears of civilised man, it is nevertheless an incontrovertible fact, and one which many others who have visited Bangkok can vouch for. After all, it is only giving publicity to that which, under a thin veil of secresy, is but, alas, too frequently practised all over our Eastern possessions, and even in Turkey and Syria.

Boats, or rather canoes, are an indispensable appendage to the houses in Bangkok. Every little cabin has its separate canoe, in which the natives paddle to market and back again; but at all hours of the night, as well as during the day, the river is swarming with floating bazaars, and each vendor has his separate cry, as distinct from one another as the cry of "Mackarel!" is from "Dust oh!" But to make the reader more at home with the subject I am endeavouring to picture to his mind's eye, I shall describe *one* day and night out of the three hundred and sixty-five that constitute the year; and as monotony is the prevailing feature in such an outlandish place as Bangkok, what occurs one day is repeated without much variation on every other.

About half an hour before daybreak, the new comer is awoke by the most interminable cawing of innumerable flights of crows, passing in every direction overhead to fields and gardens, where doubtless they had at their last evening's reunion agreed to meet, for the plausible purpose of getting an early breakfast, and astonishing grubs and insects in their nocturnal carousals, before the sparrows and the larks should get the start. This cawing continues till daylight has fairly set in, and then a host of sparrows create such a rioting as renders sleep or repose perfectly out of the question. The busy little grey squirrel commences its sharp and piercing series of cries, and the vendors

of fresh-culled flowers, fruits, and vegetables, are busily engaged in their various occupations. You rise up from your bed little refreshed by the troubled slumber of the night, and the quiet rippling of the waters invites you to plunge your fevered form into their cool and refreshing depths. Half an hour's swim makes ample amends for the loss of sleep, and this, aided by the cool morning breeze, braces you up to combat against the heats of the coming day. About sunrise you are astonished to see so many canoes, filled with unearthly-looking beings, clad in bright yellow garments, like so many dire emblems of the plague. These are the priests belonging to the different watts or churches that extend along the banks of the river on either side, and they come round at this early hour to gather their provisions for the day, for they live upon the charity of the people, and the people are charitable, either from good will and pure purposes, or from necessity, for every man in Siam must, *malgrê lui*, be charitable, as far as supporting the priesthood is concerned.

Betlenut vendors dispose of their goods as fast as they can supply customers, for this said betlenut is as indispensable to a Siamese household as the rice they eat and the water they drink. Then comes the Chinaman, with his ready-cooked pork; and the fishmonger, with his fried and well-stewed fish; and the baker's girl, with bread and hoppers, (hoppers are a delicious species of cake, made of rice flour and cocoa-nut milk;) and then an interminable string of raw commodities, sea and river fish, goats' meat and poultry, fruits, vegetables, and other minor articles of consumption; and amidst this commotion amongst the floating vendors, the city wakes to the business of the day, and man goes forth to his labour and toil. We breakfasted at Mr. Hunter's about ten o'clock every morning, and after that meal, when domiciled in his new house on shore, we were wont to walk backwards and forwards in the splendid balcony he had erected, as much for the sake of exercise, as to enjoy an uninterrupted half hour's chat; and so punctual were we in the observance of this constitutional strut, that the Siamese on the opposite banks, who

had little to do and less to think of, imagined that this exercise was some portion of a religious duty, which we were compelled to accomplish, *nolens volens*, in accordance with the rules of the penance imposed upon us; and one stout old Chinaman, a merchant of no mean repute, came to condole with Mr. Hunter, expressing sincere sympathy for his suffering, in being compelled to walk about so much during the then existing great heats, comforting him with the consolatory thoughts of the monsoons being nigh at hand, when the weather would be cooler, and the fatiguing exercise imposed less detrimental to comfort. An indolent people themselves, and wholly occupied in sedentary lollings, (for whether at home in their floating cabins, or abroad in their canoes, they are always, tailor like, seated cross-legged,) such a thing as voluntary exercise, shooting, riding, or walking, was a problem wholly beyond their capabilities of solution, and, in their estimation, that man must be a lunatic who would walk half a mile, when he might be comfortably paddled the same distance, luxuriantly seated in a canoe. After breakfast, Mr. Hunter betook himself to his counting-house, and we idlers paddled up and down the river. Some days we went to see the Portuguese consul, and his neighbours the American missionaries. At other times we called upon the French bishop, and the Catholic missionaries, all very excellent people, and well educated and talented. An inspection of the dockyards, a visit to the various watts, a chat with the Prince Chou-Faa, a shooting or fishing expedition, made time fly quickly enough. As for the Siamese themselves, they bought and sold, smoked, and drank strong tea without either milk or sugar, paid a visit of business to merchants and captains of junks, made balance-sheets and received money due to them, and paid what they owed, (this latter, however, was a rare occurrence, for I have known poor Mr. Hunter to be months and months before he could recover one *fuong* of the money due to him,) and thus they passed the earlier portion of the day, till the loud echoing trumpet, soon after mid-day, proclaimed to the world at large that his Siamese

Majesty, in condescension to the temporal wants of his people had condescended to dine, or breakfast, or whatever his meal might be termed, and then his hungry subjects set to work, and feasted lustily also. After this meal, and until about two or half-past two p.m., a perfect silence reigns around Bangkok. The heat is at this time of the day so overpowering, that even the noisy squirrel has given over cracking nuts, and seeks shelter and repose in the coolest boughs of the lofty Durian tree. Men, women, and children are hushed in the quiet sleep of their siesta; no birds are observed flying about; no noisy crows are seen hovering to and fro, and the only sound that breaks the perfect stillness of that hour is the rippling of the stream as it ebbs or flows along the parched banks of the river Menam. As for the floating bazaars, they have all long since disappeared, and having sold all that was necessary for the consumption of the city, they are now many miles down the river towards *Paklat Boon*, bartering for the remainder of their goods with the villagers that dwell upon its banks.

Even we Europeans at this hour always felt weary and full of lassitude, and in a place that lacked amusement so grievously, it is not surprising that we also indulged in the renovating oriental siesta; for there never was a breath of air out of the heavens at this period of the day to cool our fevered blood, or take off in a measure the scorching heat of the sun's rays. Between half-past two and three p.m., that most welcome of all visitors in India, commonly termed "the *doctor*," made its appearance. The uninitiated will start to hear me call a *doctor's* visit welcome; but this term in India is applied to the sea breeze, which, punctual almost to a minute, blows coolly over the parched land, reviving animal and vegetable creation beneath the soft touch of its breath, and certainly so universal a benefactor does not exist upon earth. Soon after the sea breeze sets in at Bangkok, the drowsy populace awake once more to a sense of business, and the whole river is very soon one scene of lively animation: more boats than ever are now to be seen, and more

people throng the floating houses. About this period of the day there is generally a great stir amongst the shipping—vessels arriving and departing, loading and discharging. By and by, the sun sets in the west, the short dull twilight is fast giving way to the more sombre tinges of night. The cawing of crows once more resounds through the air as they fly homeward for the night to roost; small lamps are twinkling in the floating houses, and on board the vessels; the boats of the river grow darkish, objects become indistinct, an old gong strikes the half hour after six, and the whole place is wrapt in impenetrable night.

For an hour or two after this, or, at the latest, till ten p.m., the long row of lights in the floating-houses give symptoms of wakefulness and of supper being under weigh. An occasional snatch of a Chinese carol would reach us as we sat at the hospitable board of our worthy host; by degrees even this sound would cease, and, save the low mournful cry of some hapless young vendor of fish or fruits, who dared not seek her home before disposing of a stipulated quantity, for fear of chastisement from her ruthless master, nothing disturbed the solemn stillness of night. One hour before midnight, as indicated by the old clock at Mr. Hunter's house, was the signal for us to disperse for the night, and long before that time arrived, the whole city was hushed in deep repose.

Such, with very slight variation, is the method in which all residents at Siam pass the twenty-four hours of the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year.

The Catholic Missionary Society at Bangkok, when I was there, consisted of one bishop and about ten French priests, besides one or two proselyte Chinese priests. Of the former, I hardly can name one that was not endowed with every talent that strict collegiate education could afford, and the latter were useful, because, besides being sincere Christians, they possessed the power of expounding the Scriptures to their Chinese brethren in a language natural to themselves from their birth upwards. Nor was this all: they were well skilled in medicine, and even a

few in surgery ; and if anything can win over a savage idolator to lend ear to the marvellous facts of faith, it is surely when he meets a man who has to them, apparently miraculously, relieved them from the greatest sufferings, and whose doctrine in one point of view, and that one by the Siamese considered an all-important one, entirely coincides with their own faith and religion. I allude to the celibacy of the priesthood. An ignorant demi-civilised being goes into the temple where he worships, and he sees idols, and hears fabulous tales rehearsed by the priest-craft of his idolatrous creed ; he sees certain forms and prostrations practised—the burning of incense, and bowing before well-lit shrines ; and he knows that the most heinous sin committable by a Bhuddist priest is the violation of his oath of celibacy. Of the incantations and prayers used he knows little, nor does he care to know more. Religion is to him a ceremony to be gone through ; and, as for the ultimate results of life and death, unless very fanatically disposed to defend his own faith, his chief object in life is to enjoy himself as much as he can here, and he believes that, at the worst after death, he may be metamorphosed into a snail or a lizard, or some such agreeable tenant of earth or sea.

This identical savage is, from sheer curiosity, induced to enter a Catholic church, when, to his surprise and delight, he observes, not only forms and ceremonies very much approaching to those used in his own temple, but also images and pictures, only that these latter are vastly more elegant and attractive than the uncouth modellings and daubs that he has heretofore seen. On inquiry, he is gratified to learn that the priests of this faith, like those of his own, are restricted from marrying, and his delight knows no bounds when, on the bed of sickness, his attentive doctor and good angel pours into his eager ears the simple truths of blessed Christianity, and brings his happy tale to a still happier end, by illustrating that, as by his (the doctor's) skill, the suffering body of the patient finds relief, so by the skilful aid and love of Him who died for all, the poor, uncertain,

timorous, trembling soul that felt a certain consciousness of sinful fear, and yet knew not where or how or to whom to fly for succour, hails a rock on which to rest its weary wings, and fear no more from sin's tempestuous storms!

It is not, then, to be wondered at, that the Siamese readily give ear to the Catholic priest, bound like their own in bonds of perpetual celibacy; but, moreover, the priests adapted themselves in many ways to the usages and customs of the natives themselves, and most strikingly so in one respect, that of never wearing any covering on their head and never sitting in canoes that were covered over. These are two customs which the Siamese priesthood and royal family never deviate from; for they deem it sacrilege to suppose that anything should intervene between the lofty canopy of Heaven and their own bald pates, excepting in their watts or temples, which are presumed to be hallowed, or in the palaces of the royal family, which are also holy, as containing anointed and sacred kings.

How these French priests, some of whom had almost come direct from their own country to these parts, managed to avoid getting a *coup de soleil*, while skulking up and down the river with their bare heads exposed to the vertical rays of a sun that parched up the very earth, and quite baked the clay alongside the banks of the river—this has been ever a mystery. The glare alone was sometimes sufficient to give me a headache; and yet these Catholic priests were about the healthiest set of all those residing at Bangkok.

CHAPTER III.

Royal dockyards in Bangkok.—Siamese navy.—Quarrels with Cochin Chinese.—Names of Siamese ships of war, all British.—How given.—Composition of the crews.—Labourers in the dockyard.—House of the Portuguese consul.—Anecdote about bricks.—Story of vacancy among floating houses.—Rebellion of Peer-si-pi-foor.—How it was arrested.—Awful punishment of the rebel.—Mr. Neale's audience with the king.—Wonderful Siamese map.—Tombs of the three kings.

OF the Government establishments in Siam, the dockyards at Bangkok are not the least interesting. They are partly formed by nature, and partly constructed by man. There are both dry and wet docks, but every single dock is separated from the other; and instead of forming one vast basin, they line the banks of the river for nearly a mile and a half along the right shore. In these docks, the fine vessels that compose the fleet of his Siamese Majesty were constructed, under the superintendance of an English shipwright, aided by experienced Chinese carpenters, who were sent to Bombay and there apprenticed for several years, before they were admitted into the Siamese employ.

The vessels composing the Siamese navy, at the period of my visit, were fourteen in number, chiefly commanded and officered by Englishmen, who in many cases were men of great talent and nautical experience.

The following is a list of the Siamese ships of war :—

	TONS.	CAPTAINS.	GUNS.
Conqueror	1413	Jacobs	50
Victory	1400	Rogers	...
Caledonia	1000	Middleton	44
Good Success	700	Triggs	22
Sir Walter Scott	500	De Luz	10
Ariel	150	Eglan	6

The rest were principally war-junks and gun-boats, under the command of Manilla-men and Chinese, and chiefly occupied

DRY DOCK, BANGKOK.

in cruising about the coast of Cambogia and the Malayan peninsula.

The Siamese were usually on bad terms with their neighbours, the Cochin-Chinese; and on such occasions the whole fleet were occupied in endeavouring to waylay and capture stray Cochin-Chinese merchant-junks, which generally contained very

valuable cargoes, destined for the Singapore or Borneo markets. The Siamese junks, on more than one occasion, after giving chase to a costly-freighted Tonkin junk, were but too happy to haul their wind and make the best of their way back to Siam, finding that the enemy was as well armed and manned as themselves. The precautions both parties took on sighting each other were ludicrous beyond measure. They fired shotted guns, which fell, harmless, short of the mark, somewhere about a mile and a half between them; the Cochin-Chinaman meanwhile making the best of his way towards the port of destination, and the Siamese junk shortening sail according as she discovered or guessed the strength of the enemy. We witnessed a scene of this description once, whilst lying becalmed under the lee of Pulo Obi, wholly unable, and, if truth be known, little wishing to give pursuit to the unfortunate Cochin-Chinaman who must have fallen an easy prey to us, as our vessel sailed six knots to his one, and our weight of calibre would have sunk him at the first broadside, or else so materially damaged the rigging as to have compelled him to heave to immediately. In either case the alternative was a sad one; for had we carried the crew prisoners to Siam we too well knew what cruelties and miseries they would have to undergo, under the despotic and tyrannous sway of the Siamese Government.

On one occasion the "Good Success" did capture a junk with a very rich cargo; the captain and crew came in for a handsome share of prize-money, but the unfortunate and harmless captives were subjected to the most barbarous treatment, the greatest luxury afforded them being alligator's flesh, and that not the freshest or best.

The reader will be surprised to see that most of the Siamese ships of war are called after British names. This arose from Mr. Hunter's having been on every occasion of a vessel's launch solicited to give the name, and he having interpreted the sense in Siamese, his choice usually gave the greatest satisfaction.

The "Conqueror," one of the finest vessels of the fleet, was unfortunately wrecked in a typhoon, and the "Caledonia" on a subsequent occasion very nearly shared a similar fate.

The Lascars, or sailors of the Siamese navy, were in by far the greater number Malays, the rest being Siamese or Burmese. Each vessel carried two Chinese carpenters and their assistants, and the seacunnies, or helmsmen, were principally Manilla men. Each vessel was well manned, and the "Caledonia" had a crew of two hundred and thirty-six individuals, captain, officers, and marines included.

The Siamese Government pay very liberally. The captains were in receipt of one hundred and fifty dollars per month, and the first lieutenant received a hundred, and so on, the wages gradually diminished; the very sailors themselves being in the receipt of, to them, handsome salaries.

No doctors, except Siamese ones, were permitted to enter the navy, and for my own part, I would as fain swallow a cannon ball as any of their boluses.

The shipwrights, carpenters, and labourers employed about the dockyards, were kept up on regular pay, and there seldom lacked employment for them: for what with their own vessels, and the numberless junks that traded to and fro, there seldom passed a day without some kind of job that needed their scientific aid; and the dock charges were all paid into the Government treasury.

Taking into consideration the semi-barbarous condition of the Siamese, the method they have adopted for organising their navy, and the measures taken to keep up the dockyards, so as to be both useful and lucrative, plainly evince a natural tact and discernment highly commendable, and the naval force, if well cared for and properly armed and equipped, might render infinite service in helping to crush that hornet's nest of pirates ever to be found amongst the islands and inlets of this very indifferently explored gulf, many creeks of which no civilised eye has yet penetrated, or is likely to penetrate for some time to come.

The residence of Signor Marsinello de Rosa, the Portuguese consul, was very indifferently constructed with bamboos, poles, lath and plaster, but it was an extensive house, cleanly white-washed, neatly furnished, and situated in one of the pleasantest positions in Siam. It was the original intention of the Portuguese Government to construct a splendid brick palace as a fit residence for their envoy at this illustrious court, and so far had they progressed towards the carrying out of their intention that a vessel laden with the finest bricks, and accompanied by Portuguese masons and artificers, actually sailed from Goa, (the Portuguese island on the Malabar coast,) bound for the city of Bangkok. But alas! she was tempest-tost in the China Seas, and finally stranded on some hidden shoal, from which the crew with difficulty escaped with their lives—the vessel went down—the bricks sunk with her, and so did the hopes of the poor Portuguese consul, for his Government could but ill afford to risk such another cargo, and so Signor de Rosa hoisted his flag on a flag-staff more fitting for his originally intended consulate than it was for the very unpresuming house he occupied. The consul had been residing at Bangkok since the year 1828, and had, of course, acquired a thorough knowledge of the Siamese dialect. He was a gentlemanly quiet man, who passed his life in poring over Siamese books, and seldom or never left his house unless to attend mass of a Sunday, or to return a visit to his old and attached friend Mr. Hunter. He was a meet neighbour for the quiet unpresuming American missionaries that resided in this part of the city, who were a far better disposed and educated set than those that surrounded Mr. Hunter's new residence. Messrs. Birch and Deane, in particular, were men worthy of the profession they had embraced: the former was possessed of considerable private property, so that no earthly motive could have induced him to enter the Church.

The Portuguese consulate and the missionaries' houses are in this part so constructed as to form a tolerably large square, extending from the Baptist chapel down to the banks of the river.

On the very verge of these banks stood a stately old tamarind tree, which had weathered nigh a century's storms and summers. Under this tree Signor Marsinello de Rosa had constructed a few pretty garden seats, and reared a few choice flowers. And on this spot of a morning, before the sun's rays had waxed too

PORTUGUESE CONSULATE AND MISSIONARY HOUSES, BANGKOK.

warm, and of an evening after the heat of the day had passed, the consul and his sedate neighbours used to assemble and discuss the latest news of the day, or watch the gay scene the river presented, or turn to more gloomy themes and moralise on life and its many uncertain tenures ; the incentive to such argument, and what gave it gusto, being evidently the churchyard, which was not twenty yards from the tamarind tree. I sometimes joined these réunions when engaged to dine with Signor de Rosa, and after making themselves as miserable as they could, the timely cawing of the crows homeward bound to roost would warn

Jonathan of its being time for tea and crackers, and the same warning served to remind Signor Marsinello that dinner ought to be ready, and so the melancholy knot would be unknotted. Five yards from the roots of the tamarind tree, is the jetty or landing-place, where a flight of very good wooden steps are placed, descending which we get into our canoe, and paddle up the river as fast as the tide and the sinewy arms of the Siamese boatmen will carry us.

About a mile or two further up the river, you come to a vacancy, amongst the floating-houses, situated very nearly opposite to Mr. Hunter's house—a void in those peopled thoroughfares in which no Siamese would ever wish to moor his house, or suffer his little canoe to paddle over its mystic waters. Your boatmen shudder as you pass this place, and so do you when you learn the sad tale that has doomed that spot to perpetual solitude. The story is this :—

Not many years before my arrival at Siam, and still perfectly fresh in the memory of Mr. Hunter, a revolutionary outbreak occurred in the interior provinces of Siam, the ringleader of which was one Peer-si-pi-foor, or some such hard name—a man, who, from his wealth and natural cunning, possessed great influence over many of the inhabitants of the interior provinces. In an unlucky hour for him, the demon Ambition took firm possession of his breast, and from that time forward he dreamt but of the sceptre and the supreme sway. He consulted astrologers, who augured favourably for him ; he visited old witches and beldames, and these worked up his inflamed imagination with the most brilliant pictures of success and glory ; and the Peer, backed by such a tissue of fortuitous events, proclaimed open war against the King of Siam, whom he declared to be an usurper, and issued proclamations and warrants duly electing himself lawful successor to the throne. The priesthood and populace were on his side, and to set the matter beyond the shadow of a doubt, the Peer, in open day-light, appeared in public decked gaudily in gold and tinsel habiliments, and

mounted upon the back of a *white elephant!*—it being an understood thing all over the Siamese dominions, that none but the king himself could ever presume to bestride a white elephant, the beast held in most reverence amongst them as a deity.

News of this alarming outbreak duly reached the ears of the infuriated monarch at Bangkok, who instantly gave orders that the trumpeter that day should, in addition to the usual permit granted to all other nations of the earth, blast forth a loud and direful revenge upon the head of the rebel-chief and his followers —proclaiming aloud that the celestial bodies (being connexions of the royal family) had determined upon scorching them up till they became as dung upon the earth.

The celestial bodies, however, took no active part in assisting the enraged monarch, and in the interim, the rebel and his followers made rapid progress, and were speedily approaching the very capital itself. Their name spread terror through the kingdom, and the King of Siam, amongst his fifteen hundred wives and numberless concubines, sat down and trembled as a boy would sit behind his mother's chair, who expects castigation for some juvenile delinquency. The few Europeans, inhabiting Bangkok, began to be alarmed for their lives and property, and sought safety on board of some vessels that were anchored at the mouth of the bar.

In this crisis, Mr. Hunter bethought him of turning to some use the guns that were rusting on board the vessels of war; the hint was given at head-quarters, and joyfully acted upon; and, as the ships of war were of too great a tonnage to proceed up as far as Yuthia, the ancient capital, the water there being extremely shallow, several of the guns were transhipped into smaller craft, and, with ample supply of ammunition, and under the direction of a few Englishmen and Siamese, the expedition, composed of a body of nearly twelve thousand men, sailed up the river amidst the acclamation and prayers of the whole city. On arriving at Yuthia, the guns were landed, and, by means of

trucks, conveyed to a village three miles in the interior, and in that direction from which the assault of the rebel and his followers was expected. Here, under the superintendence of Messrs. H——r and M——n (the latter in the Siamese service) serviceable batteries were soon constructed, the cannon well and firmly mounted, and loaded with grape shot. Scarce two days had elapsed after the completion of these very necessary preparations, when the frightened inhabitants of the village were awoke one morning by the shouts and victorious yells of the rebel and his followers, and great indeed was their consternation to find that the numbers of the enemy vastly exceeded their own. They would have fled instantly, had not the English and Manillamen, aided by a few staunch Malay Lascars, previously and in secret consulted together, and taken precaution against such an event. In placing the guns in the batteries, they had not neglected to have some four or five pointed towards that direction by which alone the runaways had escaped, and now, match in hand, M——n declared aloud to them, that if they dared be such dastards as to desert them at that critical moment, he would not only knock them to pieces with their own guns, but would, if obliged to return to Bangkok, have every man put to the rack to suffer a lingering death. This proclamation had a salutary effect. The Siamese, seeing escape vain, determined to act as desperate men often act, with a false courage.

Meanwhile, the noise of the invaders grew louder and more appalling ; their songs of revelry and mirth proclaimed to the listeners their certainty of undisputed possession ; they were not two hundred yards off the batteries (which they imagined to be lime-kilns, or some such harmless erections), when, at a given signal, a cloud of smoke burst forth enveloping everything in its darkness, followed by the bright flash and the thundering roar of that most unexpected artillery. The enemy reeled and staggered beneath amazement and fear, and the shrieks and groans of the dying and the wounded proclaimed the awful execution that that "*iron tempest*" had committed. Before

the smoke had cleared away, before those that were unscathed knew how to act, or where to fly to, Captain M——n, with a chosen body of Manilla-men, had sallied forth, and capturing the rebel and one or two of his followers, was on the safe side of the stockade again. The others were all busy in sponging and reloading the guns—an unnecessary precaution, as ere this operation was completed under their unskilful hands, the whole rebel army had fled far beyond range of cannon shot.

Peer-si-pi-foor was carried to Bangkok, tried as a traitor, and sentenced to death. This was what might have been expected even in countries far more civilised than Siam, but the appalling part of the tale is the method by which the sentence was put into execution. The wretched criminal was condemned, first to have both his eyes put out by the application of searing-irons, and then to be placed in an iron cage (that had formerly had for inmate a Bengal royal tiger), which was suspended just so high above the waters of the river, that the unfortunate captive by stretching his arms through the close iron bars could barely manage to touch the ripple of the waters with the extreme tip of his fingers.

Here without food or raiment, with no protection from the fierce sultry heat of the noontide sun, with his brains racking and burning, and suffering from the acutest agonies that thirst can impart, did that unhappy culprit listen to the cool rippling sound of these waters, for one drop of which, like Dives of old, he prayed to wet his parched and withering tongue. How earnestly did that man pray for death, and that dark Angel, at all times too ready to come unbidden, kept aloof, and mocked his misery for three long days and nights.

Mr. Hunter charitably undertook to petition the king, that at least the man might at once be put out of his misery; but the flint-hearted monarch had a revengeful and insatiable temper, so that the petition proved of no avail: and when the wretched rebel died as he did, at length, happily for the alleviation of his suffering, as an unconscious lunatic, a universal murmur of dis-

satisfaction spread on every side, and even the most barbarous of the Siamese conceived an utter detestation for the monarch who had so publicly displayed a spirit that evil demons could hardly excel.

The mixed groans and execrations of the dying rebel are said to have been the most heart-rending, and mothers use the name of the unfortunate Peer-si-pi-foor as a warning to hush their crying children to sleep ; the spot where the cage was suspended is still distinguishable, being the only open space along the right bank of the river, from the Portuguese Consulate up to the palace and the tombs of the three kings.

The other principal ringleaders met with comparatively easy ends, and the whole country and provinces which had risen up against the government, were laid under heavier taxation than that inflicted on any other portion of the empire.

The king gave us an audience soon after my arrival at Bangkok. Mr. Hunter introduced myself and the several European ship-masters into the royal presence. In the first place we left Mr. Hunter's about two p.m., in a very gorgeously gilded state canoe, that had been placed at our disposal by Prenawa Consett, the Lord High Admiral of Siam. On arriving at the palace steps, which were dangerously slippery and offensively filthy, we were compelled to induce the boatmen by promises of a reward, to carry us on their shoulders to *terra firma*, white duck trousers not being peculiarly suited to the puddles we should have had to hop through. Once on dry land we began to look about the court-yard of the palace. It was filled with a strange conglomeration of beautiful Italian statues, placed on pedestals of chaste workmanship, and of uncouth and unseemly figures of Siamese deities and many-armed gods. Amidst these latter, representations of many four-footed animals, held in much reverence by the Siamese, were to be seen. After loitering here for about half an hour, which half hour was pleasantly enough passed, we were summoned into an antechamber, where we were permitted the very unusual luxury of European chairs to rest

ourselves on, till such time as His Mightiness, the connexion of the many bright stars in the firmament, should see fit and proper to summon us into his most august presence. Finally, the summons came, and we were ushered into the presence-chamber of royalty: when I say ushered, I should rather have written, we hopped into the presence-chamber on all fours, like a company of frogs on the borders of a marsh; and this method of approaching the king was a leniency only accorded to us, for the Siamese themselves crept in on their stomachs, and remained prostrate during the whole interview. On our first entry, I could perceive nothing but a very magnificent curtain worked entirely of gold and silver tissue, which stretched across the whole length of the room; presently the soft notes of a remarkably sweet-toned organ reached our ears, and as the symphony gradually swelled into the beautiful cadence of one of Mozart's masterpieces, the curtain drew aside by degrees, and revealed to our expectant eyes the corpulent and half-naked body of the mighty and despotic king of Siam. The silence that ensued for some minutes was only interrupted by the sweet music of that self-performing little organ; and innumerable were the prostrations made by the craven courtiers and flatterers that surrounded His Majesty. The king was seated upon a throne (cross-legged of course,) of somewhere about two feet elevation from the ground, formed of most exquisite workmanship in ivory and ebony, with a cushion and hangings of fine red velvet, inwrought with silver: and the scene would have been very imposing, had it not been for the ludicrous appearance of His Majesty himself, who (excepting the fine gold tissue cloth wound round his loins, and reaching down to his knees,) had very much the appearance of an old overbloated Brahmin priest, and appeared to have been putting to the test that insane practice, which tradition attributes to the Brahmin tribe, of eating till the straw which they had previously tied round their stomach as a mark to limit their feastings, should burst.

At length, after puffing and blowing like a porpoise, he

managed with an evident effort to press into the service his very wheezing and wretchedly cracked voice: he told the interpreter to inform us that he had been at variance with the Burman Empire for several years past regarding a boundary question—that the Burmese were a complete flock of silly geese to dare to presume to dispute his rights—and that if they persisted in their ignorance and folly he should be compelled to send a handful of chosen valiant soldiers and one or two of his irresistible ships of war for the benign purpose of cooking his (the Burman Emperor's) goose. His corpulent Majesty got so excitable upon this subject that he insisted upon the chart of the two kingdoms (drawn, as he proudly informed us, by his own prime minister) being laid upon the ground before us, to the end that we might be fully convinced of the utter absurdity and folly of the Burmese pretension. A huge roll of canvass was accordingly produced, but before allowing it to be unrolled, His Majesty impressed upon us the incontrovertible fact that such portion of the chart as was painted red indicated the Siamese possessions, whereas the green signified the Burmese territory. The map was then carefully and slowly unrolled, the old king eyeing us the while through his fishy-looking eyes, as though he expected that the brilliancy of the painting, and the exquisite display of Siamese geographical talent, would have caused us to faint away on the spot, or go into rapturous fits of delight. Happening, however, to be Europeans, and more especially Englishmen, and having chanced to set our eyes upon such things as charts and maps before, no such disastrous effects resulted. We were, however, very nearly outraging all propriety by bursting into fits of laughter, and very painful was the curb we were obliged to wear to restrain our merriment. The inclination to smile, too visibly depicted in our faces to be mistaken, was, happily, by His Majesty, construed into delight and admiration at the beautiful work of art set before us to dazzle our eyes with its excessive brilliancy of colour. The map was about three feet by two; in the centre was a patch of red, about eighteen inches long by ten

broad ; above it was a patch of green, about ten inches long by three wide. On the whole space occupied by the red was pasted a singular looking figure, cut out of silver paper, with a pitch-fork in one hand and an orange in the other : there was a crown on the head, and spurs on the heels, and the legs, which were of miserably thin dimensions, met sympathetically at the knees, and this cadaverous looking creature was meant to

SIAMESE MAP.

represent the bloated piece of humanity seated before us, indicating that so vast were his strength and power that it extended from one end of his dominions to the other. In the little patch of green, a small Indian-ink figure, consisting of a little dot for the head, a large dot for the body, and four scratches of the pen to represent the legs and arms, was intended

for the wretched Tharawaddy, the then King of Burmah. A legion of little imps, in very many different attitudes, were dancing about his dominions, and these hieroglyphics were to show to the uninitiated in what a troubled and disturbed state the Burmese empire was, and what an insignificant personage, in his own dominions, was the Burman king. Betwixt the green and the red, there was a broad black stripe, an indisputable boundary line; and on the red side of the black stripe, a little curved thin line drawn with ink, to indicate the territory laid claim to by the Birmans but disputed by the Siamese; the rest of the map was all blue, and on this blue, which was the ocean, all round the red or Siamese territory vilely painted ships were represented sailing to and fro, some with the masts towards the land, the others evidently bottom up, at least their masts pointed in the wrong direction. The poor Burmese had not even so much as a boat to display. Having, of course, acquiesced in all that His Majesty said, and given utterance to exclamations of surprise in mute show, like so many ballet dancers, the old king seemed to be quite pleased and delighted, and ordering the map to be carried away indulged in a confidential chuckle for a few seconds. On the interpreter's return we were asked many trivial and ridiculous questions. He asked Mr. H—— if Captain de la T——e was a doctor, and on being answered in the negative he wished to be informed whether he was a barber, then on being again answered in the negative, he seemed quite surprised, for the highest profession amongst the Siamese is that of a medical man, and next to him ranks the barber.

In the very midst of all these questions and answers, and at a time when his Siamese stoutness seemed to take a very lively interest in what was going on, the curtain very suddenly and unexpectedly dropped, and the king was totally eclipsed from our admiring gaze. The courtiers made three devout humble prostrations to the curtain, and then we silently and noiselessly withdrew. As soon as we had fairly gained the

outer court, I asked an explanation of this sudden disappearance of royalty. "*Hoot awa, mun!*" said H——, who was a Scotchman, and thoroughly retained the brogue, "*Hoot awa, mun! do ye no ken that this is breakfast time?*" And so it was! His Majesty, feeling hungrily conscious of the fact, had thought fit to make this sudden exit, leaving us uninitiated in the dark for the time being. This was the first, as it was the last, visit I ever paid to the imperial palace; and my opinion was, and is now, that any common cooly picked out of the streets of Madras would have cut just as respectable a figure as His Majesty, and even perhaps have had more manners and politeness.

Leaving the palace, we strolled on foot as far as the tombs of the three kings, three of the most singular-looking pillars, I suppose, in existence. The pedestals are about twelve feet high, and are built square, each side measuring fourteen feet. These pedestals are constructed of the finest black granite, and the cornices and ring round the top and bottom part are of exquisitely-chiseled ivory, representing birds and flowers, and groups of animals: from the pedestals the pillars rise in a high conical form, and are, I should imagine, thirty feet in height, if not more, from the top of the pedestal; the columns themselves are wrought in a chessboard-pattern, having little square pieces of different materials let into the solid masonry, and so closely connected that it is only on very near inspection the cement can be discovered. No two patterns are of the same material: one is gold, the next ivory, then porcelain-ware, then copper, then silver, and so on in regular succession, but all arranged with great attention to colour and shade; and the combined effect produced by these, when the sun shines upon them and they are viewed from afar, is really dazzling beyond description. Beneath these are supposed to repose the remains of three Siamese monarchs, celebrated alike as the bravest of the brave in warfare, and the mildest of the mild in peace-time: the fathers and protectors of their people.

CHAPTER IV.

Marriage ceremonies—Description of a Siamese beauty and her accomplishments.—Siamese courtship.—Negotiation with the parents.—The Bridegroom's new canoe.—Funeral rites of the Siamese.—Burning of Bodies.

THE ceremony of marriage is seldom performed in Siam, and never amongst the poorer classes. These latter purchase or barter for a wife, so soon as they consider themselves old enough to be married, and except some stranger fall in love with the bride, and offer a round sum for her, she generally remains for life with the first choice of her heart, if that indispensable article in love has had anything to do with the affair; but the nobles and wealthier portion of the inhabitants marry and are given in marriage amongst their own peculiar class and clique, and this they do to strengthen their influence by ties with opulent and influential families. During my sojourn at Siam, two or three of the lords of the land were married, and if I describe the courtship and marriage of one of these it will be sufficient to give the reader an idea of how such things are done at Bangkok. One of the Lord High Admirals took it into his head to increase his wealth and connexions by a marriage, and fell straight in love with the daughter of the Praklan, not that he had ever

seen the fair damsel in question, but he had heard her beauties described by his mother—an old lady remarkably similar in face and shape to one of Macbeth's witches. I speak from experience, for I have often seen the old lady in question (not the witch, but the mother of Consett). Well, this old lady had filled Consett's head with very many accounts of the fair one in question; she was compared to a young and timid doe, trembling at the sight of a man from behind her muffling veils (for the higher classes go about covered like Turkish women), as a doe would at the sight of a royal tiger; her eyebrows were only to be equalled in *beauty* and blackness by a couple of leeches. Of course her eyes were diamonds—her teeth highly polished ebony—and as for her hair, no cockatoo could boast of such a tuft. Her accomplishments were ladylike and pleasing for a Siamese; she swam like an alligator—sung like a bulbul (one with a bad cold, I imagine)—danced to the music of the reed instrument—and never ceased chewing betelnut, having always a quid in her left cheek. The possession of such a treasure must needs be of very great importance to a Siamese gentleman, and consequently no time was to be lost in securing her. Under these circumstances the old mother was immediately despatched with a snow-white pigeon and a rose, to be laid at the feet of the young lady, in the name of her son. If the young lady was agreeable (and I never heard of any one getting *jewabbed*, *i. e.*, refused in Siam) then the rose was placed in her bosom, and the pigeon was liberated. The anxious lover and his friends, being on the look out in their garden, hail the return of the bird with loud acclamations and other demonstrations of joy, and pass that day and the three following in merry-making and riot. The father, so soon as he is made acquainted with the circumstance, orders his state canoe and pays a visit to the intended bridegroom. Not the slightest allusion is made on either side to the all important question at issue. The son-in-law that is to be, receives his distinguished guest with all becoming honours—a "*feu de joie*" of musketry is fired on his arrival—something is said about a

white pigeon having flown over from his house—and then the merry-making and festivity are pursued with great hilarity. Whilst this is going on at the happy man's house, the affianced lady receives the congratulatory visits of all her female acquaintance, and, like all oriental ladies, a great deal of weeping and wailing takes place, for they dearly love tears, do the Siamese ladies. They weep out of joy, and from sorrow—only too glad to find an opportunity of displaying their tender feelings: the more hardened, and such as find it difficult to cry, resort to strong onions, the juice of which makes the eye water most abundantly, and these may be termed alligator's tears.

The bridegroom is obliged to have an entirely new canoe, constructed for the express purpose of conveying the bride from her father's residence to her future abode for life, and when this boat or vehicle is finished, then for the first time the father becomes publicly acquainted with the *astounding* fact of his daughter's approaching marriage. He appears hypocritically unconscious of the fact, and naturally declines that his daughter should quit him without a handsome equivalent. This kind of parley occupies some time; at last, a talapoin, or priest, is called in to witness the signature of the bridegroom attached to a paper, which declares that the young lady in question is thenceforward his wife, and further that in case of death or accident she shall be entitled to what the law usually awards to widows, as also, that, in case of quarrels or discontentment which might lead to a separation, then the husband can only send the wife back to her father's house, on the payment of just double the dower received at her marriage. This concluded, the bridegroom returns home, and the bride soon follows in her new canoe. The wives and female relatives of the bridegroom receive her, and duly instal her in her new abode, and from that day forward they are man and wife.

In the watts or places of worship of so large a city as Bangkok, we naturally had often occasion of witnessing the funeral rites and ceremonies of the people. As a result of the climate, bodies

could not be kept for a longer period above ground than what was absolutely necessary for the requisite preparations, which, amongst the better classes, consisted in embalming the bodies with spices and rich oily perfumes, such as oil of sandalwood, attar of roses, and other such-like ingredients, which facilitated and expedited the consumption of the body, and its utter reduction to ashes when once exposed to the flames of the fuel placed under and piled around the bier, cemented together with cow-dung and clay, and grotesquely decorated with flowers, both artificial and real. The court-yards of the watts are, so to say, the cemeteries of the Siamese ; at least, they are the last places on this earth in which the human form of the Siamese reposes before becoming a nothing — a thing without shape or existence, scattered by the four winds of heaven as they list. The last rites of a rich man in Siam are certainly emblematical, to such as studied the matter at all, of the vanity and vain end of all human pomps and glories. The man who had enjoyed wealth and indolent luxuriance during a long life spent in the achievement of worthless pleasures, that man, now bereft of all those senses the gratification and indulgence of which were his every-day pastimes, lies stretched inanimate, and horribly void of everything to which life and intellect lend such a glorious *being;* a cold, rigid piece of clay, infinitely below comparison with the least creeping insects of the earth, over whose head he once proudly strode, but which *now,* in seeming mockery, full of that life and energy which he so fearfully lacked, crawl in multitudes around, basking in the rich glow of sunshine, inhaling every breath of heaven, and running the giddy race of life, attracted evidently to the spot by the rich smell of *malliapoo* (an eastern jessamine), an odoriferous plant, and one containing secreted saccharine matter, on which various insects, from the bee and butterfly to the small black ant, delight to feast. Festoons of flowers hang round the bier, which is usually covered with a richly-worked piece of Indian muslin ; men and women in holiday attire and a large number of priests are gathered around the

remains of their departed friend, joining in every indecorous demonstration of enjoyment and amusement, till the propitious hour for the commencement of the last requiem arrives. Meanwhile, nature around wears generally a smiling aspect; the gaudily-built watt, whose lofty and richly inlaid spires are glittering in the rich afternoon sunlight; the various groups of flower-shrubs waving their beautiful boughs to and fro as the cool evening breeze rocks them ever and anon; the tall handsome fruit-trees of the East, clad in rich profusion of foliage, amongst whose many branches birds of fifty plumages are sporting and carolling gaily; the clearness of the sky itself, the cool blue waters of the mighty river that ripples close up to the very spot where all that remains of a once haughty man now lies exposed to the last gaze of that bright nature to whose very brightness he but seldom gave one passing thought;—these and many other similar circumstances serve to give the spectacle that solemnity and dread attraction, which, beyond doubt, it should ever command. At length the chief talapoin gives the signal that the propitious hour for the ceremonial has at length arrived; the notes of a discordant band now strike up a hideous music; the priests commence repeating prayers and incantations; relations assemble round the bier, which is denuded of its rich coverings; and the body, being lifted from the wooden coffin, is laid by one of the officiating laity on the vast pile of combustible matter. Lighted tapers are handed to all those present, without respect to creed or position in life; each helps to ignite the pile; and the angry flame rears itself proudly in the air, enveloping shortly all in one thick dense cloud of smoke and fire. Meanwhile the relatives stand in a circle round the fire, and go through the prescribed ceremonial of tossing their clothes, tied up in small compact bundles, six times over the intensely hot flames, taking alike great precaution that no particle of fire should attach itself to these bundles, or that they should by any mishap chance to let them fall to the ground. Meanwhile the fire blazes on intensely, the crackling of faggots.

and other things too horrible for the conception, ceases, the smoke diminishes, the furnace still continues to emit small streaks of flame at intervals, and so effectually has the incendiarism of the priests been perpetrated, that not one atom of that wonderful structure once called a man now exists, save a few handfuls of ashes, which, owing to a sun-dried kiln on which the body lies, have been protected from mingling with the cinders of the numerous other ingredients consumed in the fire. The ceremony is over; the birds chaunt sweetly as ever; the sun shines as unclouded; the trees alone have lengthened their shadows a little; but beyond this there is no grave, or no one mark more positive to indicate to the inquirers of some few months hence the exact spot where the dead man lay, than there is upon the mighty ocean to show where such and such a sailor found a watery grave!

Now with respect to the formula observed by the relations, of tossing their clothes over the dead body six consecutive times, I could acquire no exact information, nor has any as yet been discovered as existing in the Siamese religious code, by the many European travellers of almost all European nations, who visited Siam nearly two centuries ago. I have, however, little doubt that this ignorance mainly arises from travellers lacking opportunity and position which might enable them to investigate thoroughly the Siamese libraries (which chiefly belong to the various watts), and which abound with palm-leaf MSS. of Siamese authors of a very ancient date.

No European has yet visited Siam that has not to a certain extent been the dupe of oral traditions. The learned talapoins have in all ages evinced a dislike to enter too freely on the subject of their creeds and disbeliefs, when conversing with strangers; and, even when permitted to have free access to their libraries, it would occupy a man's lifetime in looking over these uncouth records of literature, before perhaps arriving at one really useful and instructive MS.; besides which, a man must have been many years a resident on the spot, and had continual

intercourse with natives of all classes, before he could acquire anything approaching to a perfect knowledge of the Siamese language. The longest resident Europeans at the capital have been almost invariably merchants, men whose whole soul and energies were exhausted in acquiring wealth, or discovering some new opening in the commercial enterprise of Siam, which might eventually lead to such a desideratum. Some of the French missionaries, who had for upwards of a quarter of a century resided at Bangkok, possessed both the talent and the means of penetrating further into Siamese lore and literature than *any Europeans* have heretofore done; but whether they have given their experiences to the French public or not, I am at a loss to ascertain. One man (an ingenious clever man in his way, and a Chinaman to boot) told a friend of mine that he imagined the formula observed at the funeral ceremony of the Siamese, viz., *that of tossing bundles*, may be traced to have originated with a superstition very prevalent amongst the priesthood of Siam, viz., that there exists an immense gulf of fire between this world and a future better state, and that a man, according to his conduct in life, is enabled to skim this flaming lake scathelessly, and without fear. Six times, however, is the soul of even the very best destined to undergo life in the shape and form of a man before acquiring a perfect and permanent right to enter into an eternal rest on those Elysian shores, which, according to the height of Siamese indolent luxuriance, abound with pleasant sleep and smiling dreams, and brighter waking realities. During these six trials on earth, should the man prove guilty of an offence towards the deities, then is he condemned to a renewed term of purgatory, which extends over a greater or less space of time, according to the gravity of the offence committed; if only a peccadillo, the punishment is lenient, and the next appearance on earth is in the human form; if of a graver nature, he has the felicity of visiting this in shape of an owl, or a snake, or a centipede, or some such little desirable creature; and if, after this reduction in the ranks of life, the soul, instead of repenting, turns more

stubborn or mutinous than the body which contains it, it is immediately dissolved—the owl is shot or the snake killed, and the penalty becomes vastly augmented and extended through a century of years, during which century the criminal spirit is said to be occupied in the not very delightful task of carrying water in a wicker basket, from the stream of abundance (the Menam) across an extensive fiery plain, a journey of many hours' heat and thirst, to quench the insatiable thirst of a fiery old dragon that dwells on the other side, and who, notwithstanding the many unfortunates employed in his service, can never get more than about a teaspoonful of water in the space of an hour, to cool his scorching throat. Hence (said the Chinaman), to wish their departed friend a safe transit across this dreadful gulf, they toss their clothes over the flames consuming his mortal remains, the action being emblematical of their wishes that, as their clothes unscorched reach their hands after flying over the fire, six successive times, without one break in the interval, so they trust that this may be the sixth and last visit of the now departed spirit across the flaming gulf, to the sought-for haven of repose. In connection with this theory, I may remark, that the Siamese seldom or never, in any amusement, resort to the recreation of catching a thing with their hands; as a ball, for instance; neither will they make use of a bat, but they invariably bring the sole of the foot into play, as in the instance of their method of playing battledore and shuttlecock.

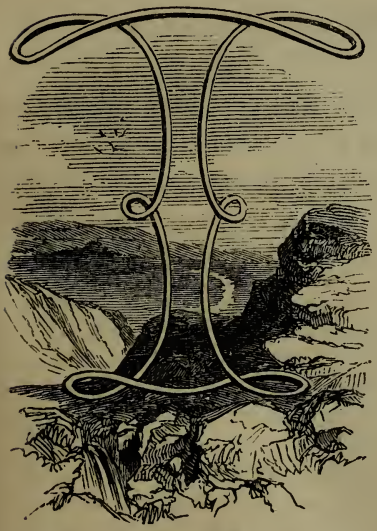
Burning is not always resorted to by the Siamese—there are many of the poorer classes who cannot afford to pay the talapoins their accustomed fees, insignificant though they comparatively be; but these very poor people inhabit the villages of the interior, and they bury their dead, simply marking the spot with a bamboo pole, so that in point of fact no grave is to be seen in the whole of Siam, excepting in such small spaces as have been allotted to Europeans, and Christian and other sects inhabiting Bangkok, and which are so insignificant as barely to attract attention. So rare are these instances of

poverty, and so exclusively are the spots known to the relatives (who leave marks simply to identify the spot, in case of future prosperity smiling upon them, and enabling them to recover the bones for the purpose of burning them), that not even the Siamese can indicate the spot that denotes a grave, as bamboo poles are used for landmarks, and employed in various other methods.

When any epidemic has prevailed at Bangkok, or when the cholera scourges that city, then all ideas of ceremonials are instantly abandoned; the bodies of men, women, and children, in whom life is barely extinct, are bundled without distinction into large pits or tanks, or, what is even still worse, into the river.

CHAPTER V.

Geographical description of Siam.—Account of the inhabitants.—Chinese part of the population.—Articles of commerce.—Native wealth of Siam.—Vegetable and mineral.—Reasons why it is not developed.—Gamboge.—Petrats.—The Tokay.—Adventures with.—Birds.—Fruits.—Climate of Bangkok.—Food of the Siamese.—Intoxicating drinks.—Samshoe.—General temperance of the people.—Prevalent diseases.—Digression on the effect of change and custom on our ideas of beauty—Description of the Monsoons.—Ravages of cholera.—Precautions against.—Kitchen vegetables.—The tea-plant.



THE Siamese Empire consists of Lao, part of Cambogia and a few small Malayan States; but the question of boundary lines has ever been a sore bone of contention between the Siamese and their immediate neighbours: hence it is difficult to draw an exact limit to these possessions, they often laying claim to states and territory which are in reality under the sway of the Burmese or Cochin-Chinese. The extent of Siam in geographical miles may, however, be pretty correctly guessed from the information on this head amassed by the Prince Chou-Faa; he reckoned its area to consist of about one hundred and eighty-four thousand miles; but little is known of the nature of the country in the interior, excepting that the skirts of it are very mountainous, and that large tracts of jungle exist, which afford an

asylum to numerous elephants and great numbers of beasts of prey. These lofty ranges of mountains are distinctly seen from parts of the gulf, and one or two conical and singularly-shaped hills are excellent land-marks to guide the navigator. The Menam flows right through Siam, and small vessels could and do navigate it to a great distance up the interior. An annual inundation takes place along its banks, and this has in all probability induced the natives to abandon erecting cottages on *terra firma*, excepting at inland villages, and there they, like the natives of Sumatra, have them propped up on very lofty poles. Thai Yoi and Thai Noe are the two distinct tribes that inhabit Siam; the former being the fierce and independent mountaineers who, like the Anzari Arabs in the Sultan's dominions, scorn servitude, or to bend to the yoke of taxation. These have, in times of war and trouble, proved themselves valiant and efficient soldiers; but, like bandits and outlaws, they make occasional descents into the low country, which they pillage at their will and pleasure. The Thai Noe, or lowlanders, suffer themselves to be governed and ruled by the laws of the country, and are for the greater part a peaceable and even honest set, and are chiefly employed in agricultural pursuits. Many Chinese * who have

* Mr. Finlayson, who accompanied Crawford's embassy, says :—"It is to the Chinese nation that the Siamese are indebted for whatever knowledge they possess of the advantages of commercial intercourse. In defiance of the laws of the Celestial Empire there would appear to be scarcely any limit to the extent of emigration from that great empire. Her subjects are the best and most industrious part of the population of the surrounding nations, over whom their industry, their superior intelligence, and knowledge of the arts have given them a great and decided superiority. Siam, a country sunk under the most debasing tyranny, destitute alike of arts and commerce, offered a fair field for the development of their superiority. Fear had long opposed obstacles to the increase of the Chinese, till at length the government, either from conscious incapacity of restraining them longer, or from motives of a different nature, has at length given them the most unbounded encouragement, and granted them privileges which render their condition infinitely preferable to that of the natives of the country. On the other hand, the benefits which the Chinese emigrants have conferred on this rude nation are of obvious and striking utility, and of no ordinary importance. They have sown the seeds of commercial enterprise. They have created commerce where none previously existed, and with their hands they have, as it were,

settled and married in Siam reap immense wealth from sugar-plantations they possess in the interior : others are occupied in the cultivation of tobacco and several kinds of cotton, and a few make a living by collecting a gum much used as incense. Gamboge, sapan wood, and other valuable products are all brought from the interior to Bangkok, where, being weighed and taxed, they are retailed to the more opulent merchants established in that city, and by these latter shipped for Singapore, Bombay, and England. Black pepper is abundant and cheap ; its growth is a kind of monopoly, purchased of the king, and of this article alone, in 1841, no less than 5,000,000*l.* were shipped for various markets. Under a better sway, what country in the East would rival Siam ? Rich in its soil and productions, possessed of valuable mines and gums, spices and pepper, the best and cheapest rice and sugars, and the land absolutely encumbered with the most luscious fruit in the world. The article of cocoa-nut oil alone would yield no inconsiderable revenue ; but though the Siamese call themselves Thai, or *free*, they are, at the best, an oppressed and cringing people, too full of their own troubles and taxation to give a thought to the improvement of their own resources by diligent labour and occupation. Even as matters stand, the export trade is estimated at nearly a million sterling, whilst the imports are very insignificant, and many parts of the interior are wholly unsupplied with numbers of articles that would find a ready and easy market. This is partly attributable to the exorbitant tonnage dues and duties that are levied upon foreign vessels and their cargoes, which necessarily very much augment the value of goods, and thus place them beyond the reach of that poorer

called into existence some of the more valuable objects of commerce. Scarce twenty years have elapsed [he is writing in 1821] since the first sugar-canes were planted in this kingdom. The annual produce in sugar at the present time is stated to amount to 30,000 peculs, of 133½ lbs. each, or 1788 tons. This constitutes, in fact, the most valuable commercial article of the realm. The culture is managed solely by the Chinese, and it is the opinion of the chief Suri-Wong that it may be carried to an almost unlimited extent."

class of merchants who alone would undertake the risks and difficulties attendant upon a commerce with the interior, more especially as regards the returns to be purchased or bartered, the value of which, when brought to Bangkok, after all expenses incurred, would barely cover the outlay.

The gamboge obtained at Siam is very brilliant in colour. It exudes from incisions made in the bark of a tree, and is caught or collected in small chatties or earthern pots (such as are used to collect toddy in India) suspended from the boughs of the trees. It requires no further preparation to make it fit for the market, speedily assuming a concrete form. The Siamese are mostly tillers of the ground, with the exception of such as reside at Bangkok; they have all the hard and laborious work, and the Chinese monopolise the easier and more scientific, as also more lucrative employments, such, for instance, as making and refining the sugar. The annual inundations of the Menam are very beneficial to the sugar-cane plantations and rice fields, both of which in these hot climates require a great deal of moisture—upon the same plea as the soldier had on being taxed with habitual drunkenness—"The climate was always a-hot, and made him always a-dry."

It is a remarkable fact that in the kingdom of Siam, with the exception of the very lowest menials, there are no two persons of the same grade or rank; and, from the king downward, each in his turn receives homage from his inferiors, which homage is paid by prostration and remaining in that attitude during the whole interview. In Europe and the more civilised countries, people rise up as a mark of respect to any that may chance to enter the room; in Siam, they squat down with their hands crossed and their heads hanging down with an abashed air. When servants bring in refreshments, they crawl about the room in a very ludicrous attitude, putting one forcibly in mind of the disagreeable fact that men and monkeys are, after all, very much alike; and this similitude is one reason why

monkeys are so much respected, all over the Indian continent, by the many castes that place implicit faith in the doctrine of transmigration: for all *good* men of their faith are presumed, after this life, to assume the form most approximating to that which they had quitted. At Sautgar—a station half-way between Bangalore and Madras, and celebrated throughout the presidency for the very fine oranges its gardens produce—the innumerable troops of monkeys that infest the neighbourhood are permitted, unmolested, to plunder the fruit, and very fair havoc they make. On one occasion, a young officer who shot one of these felons was attacked, not by the natives, but by troops of savage and malignant monkeys, that surrounded the traveller's bungalow, and actually tried to force open the strongly-barricaded door, to the alarm and terror of the young man, who remained in this unenviable position till his servants and palanquin-bearers came to the rescue. The Siamese have an innumerable string of minor deities, some in the shape of rats and cats, and their months and days of the month are named after these. I was astonished, on visiting the houses of some of the inhabitants, to see a huge rat walking quietly about the room and crawling up the master's legs in a cool familiar manner. Instead of repulsing it, or evincing any alarm, he took it up in his hands and caressed it; and then I learnt, for the first time, and to my utter astonishment, that it was a custom prevalent in Bangkok to keep pet rats, which are taken very young and carefully reared, till they attain a perfectly monstrous size from good and plentiful feeding. These domestic rats are kept expressly to free the house of other vermin of their own race, and so ferocious are they in the onslaughts they make that few of the houses are ever annoyed by mice or rats. The houses are occasionally infested with reptiles, the banks of the river being literally overrun with snakes, toads, and that most disgusting of all disgusting lizards, the tokay. The tokay is peculiar to Bangkok, and at certain seasons of the year appears in swarms

larger than the ordinary run of lizards and bloodsuckers. In shape it somewhat resembles an alligator (though of course much smaller), and has a leprous-coloured skin, and a cry as sudden as it is excessively disagreeable. Never shall I forget the sudden start I experienced on first hearing the tokay. I was fast asleep, and the hour somewhere about midnight, when, to my astonishment, I awoke with the repeated cry of "Tokay! tokay! tokay!" proceeding evidently from no great distance above my head, and apparently within the mosquito gauze curtains. All in the dark, both as to the cause of the sound, and from the fact of the candle being out, I tumbled out of bed as speedily as I could, and after some search for a match, having succeeded in striking a light, I saw, with astounded eyes, the most unwelcome partner of my bed quietly reclining against one of the bed-posts, and certainly not more than a foot above my pillow. I could hardly believe my eyes. I had travelled over many parts of India where all kinds of creeping things prevail, but never had I set eyes on such a vile thing as this was. I shuddered again, as the thought flashed across my mind that in all probability it had crept right over me to get to where it then was. I soon awoke my friend, Mr. Hayes, a young partner of Mr. Hunter's, who was sleeping in the next room to mine, and instead of getting any consolation from him, was greatly laughed at for my excessive trepidation, with the quiet assurance that such things were an every-day occurrence; and so in the sequel I found they were; though no boarding-school mistress ever inspected the tables and cupboards in the bedrooms in more fear and trembling of finding that most dreadful animal, *a man*, than I used to search for these tokays of a night; and many and many a time have I had a skirmish with them, before being enabled to clear the room. They possessed such wonderful elasticity, that they would jump from one wall up which they were climbing, to nearly a distance of a couple of yards; for which reason I always kept at a respectful distance,

and armed myself with the longest sticks I could procure. They are said not to be venomous, nevertheless I liked not their looks. Snakes were also very plentiful in Mr. Hunter's house, and, with the exception of the really pretty green snake, so common at Madras, were principally of an amphibious kind. It was no pleasant sensation to me at first to be so frequently brought in contact with these creatures. Fancy, looking out of bed in the morning, and, from some hole in the corner (for the chunnaming, or lining, of Mr. H.'s house had not been very skilfully effected), seeing the head of a serpent peeping out, and not knowing whether to jump out of bed and take flight, or remain and stare him back into his retreat again. It is certainly astonishing how custom makes one become callous to these sort of things, and look upon them as matter of course, and almost an agreeable pastime which you feel sorry to miss. One thing certainly added to bring about this kind of feeling, and that was, never hearing of a single accident occurring from the stings or bites of these reptiles. But the reverse of this may be said as regards the Madras Presidency, for there the famed cobra de capello spreads terror around, and the no less venomous carpet-snake has also to be sadly dreaded. Not a few instances occur of unfortunate palanquin-bearers having died in the course of a few hours, from having inadvertently set foot upon a snake.

It is singular to see, in the gardens on the banks of the Menam, a few hours higher up than the city itself, the immense variety of birds that are carolling and chattering noisily away. Large flights of parroquets are screaming over head, and the fine large blue mountain pigeon is cooing to his timid mate. These gardens are seldom visited during the great heat of the day, as the people keep within doors, and are generally enjoying a siesta. Occasionally, however, we used to make up a little party, to take tiffin under the shade of some lofty mango-tree, seated under which we sometimes got a shot or two at stray

pigeons and parrots, both of which mixed in a pie, form a dish to be by no means sneered at.

For the profuseness and fineness of its fruits few places can rival Siam. The mango, the jack-fruit, and the durian, are most abundant; but as for the last mentioned, few strangers would relish the idea of either smelling or tasting it. The jack-fruit is, I think, excellent when mixed with salt and water, and the kernels or seed, of which it is very full, are very good when roasted, and resemble much in flavour our European chesnut.

Bangkok is in a great measure free from many of those fatal and lingering complaints to which the European community of the three presidencies of India are subject. I never knew a single instance of that torturing malady, the liver complaint, that scourge to which thousands of our countrymen have fallen victims, partly from their own negligence with regard to diet and abstemiousness in drink, and partly attributable to the excessive heats to which they are exposed in the various up-country stations. Kamptee, Cuddapeh, Massulipatam, and some other similar cantonments, contain in their graveyards fearful records of the havoc that has been, and is being, committed annually by this lingering, but in most cases too surely destructive, disease; and there is hardly a family in England that has had two or three members at any of the aforementioned and other stations but what has to deplore the premature death of one or more. In Bangkok the heat is never of long continuance, and those unwholesome and most disagreeable land breezes, called at Madras, the *long-shore winds*, are here altogether unknown. Again, the natives are quite uninitiated in the art of curry-making; their food, though seasoned with spices and hot condiments, does not possess one-hundredth part of the hot fiery substance and biliously rich gravies used in the concoction of an Indian curry. The Siamese and the Chinese residing in Siam are remarkably fond of soup, or, more properly speaking, a species

of porridge, in which, though the main ingredient be pork, vast quantities of vegetables are used, and mint and black peppercorns in a measure counteract the bilious effects of the, in other respects, rather greasy soup. Very few of the natives are addicted to strong drink, their chief beverages consisting of tea, the sweet toddy fresh from the cocoa-nut tree, and the pure harmless water of the Menam. The fermented toddy known in India as *arrack* is seldom or never seen, and such amongst them as do drink confine themselves, if they be wealthy men, to European wines and spirits that they can purchase from vessels frequenting the port; or if not possessing the means to indulge in these luxuries, quaff that most baneful and least desirably-flavoured spirit in the world, *samshoe*, a Chinese invention, and which is distilled from rice, after the rice has been permitted to foment in, generally speaking, vinegar and water. This *samshoe* is sometimes flavoured with cinnamon and sugar, and under this guise it assumes the name of a liquor. Doctor B. assured me that its pernicious effects upon the human system were more speedy and sure than a double amount of pure brandy or rum would produce in a much greater space of time. There are but few, however, as I before stated, that indulge in these propensities, and to their systematic method of life, as well as to the fact of Bangkok being daily visited during certain hours by a most invigorating and healthful sea breeze, may be traced the cause of the non-existence of the liver complaint. Neither are fevers of a malignant character at all prevalent. Isolated instances sometimes occur of people falling victims to fevers very similar in their character to the typhus; but these may generally be traced to have originated out of the town itself, and from the incautiousness of the patient in having exposed himself to night miasmas, in the vicinity of unhealthy jungles and marshy grounds.

Diseases of the eye, diarrhœa, and rheumatic fevers, are the usual complaints in Bangkok. To the latter, many Europeans,

both sailors and missionaries, have succumbed. Mr. Hunter lost his head clerk, Mr. Smith, of Paisley, a few months before my arrival at Bangkok ; and Mr. Hayes, his partner, was only just recovering from a very severe attack, that had confined him to his bed for nearly twelve months. The tortures inflicted by this malady are, I was informed, beyond description excruciating; and poor Smith, before he found release from all earthly sufferings, was in such a state, that his groans and shrieks of agony were of the most heart-rending description. Nor could he suffer any one to approach within a yard of his bed, so painfully sensitive had he become to the slightest touch or movement. I must here, however, mention that at the period of Mr. Smith's illness and death, Mr. Hunter and all his friends were living in floating houses; and it is my steadfast belief, that had the new house been built and ready for occupation, no such fatal results would have ensued. The damp, unwholesome smell of these floating houses, be they ever so well matted and carpeted ; their close and continual proximity to the water, however strong the bamboo raft, and in spite of all the care taken by means of numerous windows and air holes to keep the rooms dry and pure ;—these must in the long run be most deleterious to the health of the occupants, and I imagine that it simply depends upon the natural constitution whether, sooner or later, they experience the baneful effects of their aquatic residences.

Judging from the appearance of such of the inhabitants of Central Siam as chance or mercantile occupations brought to the capital, as also of the natives dwelling in the inland villages, not many miles distant from it, the climate of Siam must be upon the whole very healthy. The natives are a fine, robust, healthy looking set of men and women, and the fresh tinge of health that circulates in their veins, and gives a crimson tint to their half brass, half copper-coloured cheeks, detracts considerably from the natural ugly formation of their features,

and in some instances makes them appear almost handsome; but there everything goes by comparison. Doubtless, to the eyes of an utter stranger, who had not been in the habit of staring at a people without exception the ugliest in the known world, through a series of months and years, these inland beauties would have seemed perfect guys of ugliness. I have often found this to be the case. Memory, however retentive, and however well aided by pictures the most beautiful that the human imagination can conceive, and human art illustrate, gradually becomes inert, and cannot exercise its powers of vivid recollection with regard to face and features, as it can with regard to scenes and incidents even the most trivial; you can remember and that is all, that some object of affection or admiration was something very beautiful and fair to behold; but as to tracing in this mental retrospect one single feature as it then appeared to you, or delineating one single curve in its sylph-like form, this soon becomes an utter impossibility, unless the dried-up resources of the fountain of memory be afresh supplied by the truthfulness of a dream, and most marvellously correct are the phantoms then conjured up. Faces long forgotten are at a moment, when perhaps least thought of, revived with unmistakeable veracity, but so faint an impression is left behind, that nearly all recollection of it flies with our waking thoughts. This is the case with those whose long absence from their native country makes them almost incredulous in their own senses. I have seen faces in Penang and Singapore that I thought must rival, if they did not even surpass, those that we gaze upon in Regent street. I have left Penang, and gone to the Malabar coast, and then, when I saw some of the *Malay ladies*, why, I found that they were prettier than those of the Eastern Archipelago and the Straits of Malacca. And so on, in each country I have visited, and always with the same result, viz., that so surely as I returned to England and gazed upon our native belles, when I saw that in addition to the most perfect symmetry of features,

there was the stamp of understanding upon their lovely faces, that affection beamed in each eye, and warmth of feeling oozed out from betwixt their rosy lips ; that education, and innocence, and moral refinement, dwelt like a bright cloud of light refulgent in their faces, then was I compelled to avow, as I now most steadfastly do, that there is no country like Great Britain in the world for beauty, wit, and wisdom. All this, however, has very little to do with the climate of Siam ; so, after begging pardon for this digression, I must e'en return to the subject.

The climate, then, as I before stated, appears on the whole to be healthy. The city of Bangkok, were its houses constructed on the banks of the river, and not on the river itself ; were they built of bricks, supported on a solid foundation, and not of wood, supported by floating bamboos ; were they erected in wide, commodious streets, with drainage to carry off everything unwholesome into the river, instead of being huddled close together, with only narrow little channels, just wide enough to admit of the passage of a canoe, and so constructed as to form a reservoir for all vegetable and other impure matter which gets entangled under the rafts on their passage down the river ; then, and under such favourable circumstances, Bangkok might vie with any town in the East for its salubrity of climate, and the beauty and convenience of its position. The glorious Menam would then be unfettered from bank to bank, and would render rich services in cleansing the place of its impurities, at the same time that it afforded a larger space of anchorage for shipping, which might be permitted to swing with the tide.

As in India, the two monsoons are pretty regular in their appearance at Bangkok ; the precursor of their arrival is generally speaking excessively close, sultry weather—gloomy withal ; and this gloomy weather is as much appreciated in Siam as a fine sunny day would be in the winter months in England. It is such a treat, after being accustomed to the strong glare of a

scorching sun, to see everything about you looking of a cool colour, wearing a nice, gloomy kind of aspect, as though the sun had put on blue spectacles, and was looking down mildly at us from afar. No one ever dreams of remaining in the house on these days, except such as are unable (God help them!) to quit the couch of sickness. The bare idea of a siesta is scouted with contempt, and the very crows leave their mid-day haunts amidst the shady jungles, and resort to the open fields with joyous cawing. There has not been a drop of rain for the last five months, nor has a cloud obscured the sun during that long interval. The parched earth is cracked and dried up; vegetation has almost entirely disappeared from the ground; husbandmen have long since laid by the plough and sickle, and the sugar-planter begins to fear that the canes will all dry on their roots; for though irrigation is often resorted to, the ground is too dry and thirsty to admit of its doing much benefit to the sickly-looking, half-faded plants. At length, the long-looked-for monsoon arrives, his harbingers being gloomy days, and dark, threatening clouds, mounting high up one upon another; there is an occasional growl of far-off thunder, and now and then a distant flash of sheet lightning. Men and boys are now seen busily engaged on the thatched roofs of the different floating houses, pulling out handfulls here—putting in fresh palm-leaves there—laying heavy stones and other weights along the edges, and on the top of the roof, and getting everything in order to withstand the first outburst of the fast approaching monsoon. As for the women, they have no rest, nor do they wish for any, till everything is snugly housed inside. There are large jars of pickles, and vinegar, and preserves, and innumerable other articles, that have been exposed to the sun for the last fortnight; all these must be carried in before nightfall, to say nothing to sundry mats on which onions, and garlic, and pepper, and salt, and cunning spices, have been exposed for a fortnight's airing; these, too, must be put into jars and other receptacles, and when

all this is done, and everything is out of harm's way, then there is a long line of baby-linen, or rather, infantine rags, which has to be taken in before they get wet again ; and these, and other little incidental jobs, having been completed, the good woman sits at the door of her cabin, smoking a quiet cigaret, and wishing that the storm would commence, just to cool the air a little, as she has nothing to dread from its wind or rain.

Meanwhile the river presents a very busy scene also : men on board vessels of all nations and sizes are busily engaged preparing for the conflict — moorings are inspected — additional anchors dropped — cables veered out — hatchways and tarpaulins put on ; and, while the Chinese skippers think they will be far more comfortable and safe on shore, and accordingly land, leaving their vessels to the care of a boy, bluff English shipmasters, urged by a contrary inclination, get themselves rowed along-side as fast as they can, and having ensconced themselves in rough pilot coats and impervious sou'-westers, walk the poop in all the dignity of station, with a short clay-pipe stuck in their mouths, and their hands plunged deep in the recesses of their pockets. Occasionally they lean over the bulwarks and take a long, steadfast gaze at the approaching tempest, and, having made a mental calculation of its strength and duration, and the probable time it will take in reaching the vessels, walk over to that end of the ship which is nearest to Mr. H.'s house, and with both hands up to their mouths raise a gentle warning kind of a bellow to the effect that "*It's a-coming.*" At last it *does* come ; we hear the voice of the wind long before it reaches : all the doors and windows on this side of the house have been firmly secured, and, to prevent accidents, heavy chests of drawers, and other weighty substances, have been placed against them, for should any one of them be burst open, it would be a moral impossibility to shut it again before the fury of the storm abated. Everybody is on the look out, having a back entrance open by which to retreat, should the

gusts of wind be overpowering. There's a tremendous rustling amongst the cocoa-nut and mango trees on the other side of the river; leaves and little twigs of trees are seen flying high up in the air; in another second, the vessels are all lying over on their sides as if they never meant to right again—they swing violently round to the breeze, and, in so doing, the tempest bursts right over head, and rain, wind, lightning, thunder—all seem combined on destruction and devastation. The squall lasts sometimes an hour, sometimes more, and then there is a little respite. The air becomes most deliciously cool, and the sweet exhalations from the grateful earth are delightful beyond description. There is a freshness in all nature, and the heart swells with joy and gratitude towards that Great Beneficent Being, who has looked down and remembered His creatures upon earth. Such is the commencement of the monsoon. The lull between the first squall and the regular set in of the season is of some hours' duration, and during this lull the weather is extremely invigorating. Myriads of frogs are now heard croaking from their damp retreat, ducks become quite a nuisance, and large flocks of wild water-fowl, of every imaginable description, are flying overhead at all hours, taking an inland direction, where the lakes and the tanks will be soon full to overflowing, and which will afford shelter and food for them for several weeks to come. Night closes in sooner than usual to the music of distant thunder, the air is cool and refreshing, and sleep, such as has been a stranger to the eyes for many nights past, now blesses the repose of the slumberer. You awake about midnight, and hug your pillow closer to your cheek as you listen to the roaring of the tempest without, and the rain that is falling too in torrents, happy to find yourself snug in-doors and unexposed to the fury of the gales. Sleep soon steals over one again, and the next morning you rise quite a different man to what you have felt for many months past. Rain, rain, rain, no stop to rain—night and day—day and night, no cessation whatever;

and this kind of work continues for eight or ten days. Look out of the window, there is nothing but puddles; look out of the door, and you behold that most wretched looking of all the feathered tribe in wet weather—a cock; he has hardly heart left in him to crow, and seems to regard the weather as a very serious affair indeed, and a great interruption to his dung-hill enjoyments. There is no amusement in-doors but reading books and musty old newspapers, or writing dull letters to friends at a distance. Occasionally we amused ourselves at Mr. Hunter's by playing *Lagrace*, and we were once or twice guilty of a game at ring-taw, the marbles being our own manufacture out of sealing-wax. Night, however, brought with it its enlivening candle lights. The darker and more stormy the night, the more brilliantly illuminated the rooms used to be; and if the weather was particularly damp, we made ourselves comfortable with a good dinner and some fine old sherry, and then, as a wind-up, just a *leetle* drop of hot whiskey toddy to make, what is vulgarly termed "a night cap." After the first heavy rains of the monsoons at Bangkok, sickness generally prevails to a greater or less extent, and if the rains have been of unusually long duration, cholera, that scourge of the East, makes its appearance. Those struck by this most fatal disorder generally succumb within the course of a few hours; for rare, indeed, are the instances on record of a native having been effectually cured: sometimes they rally, and appear to all intents and purposes cured, but in these cases the debility of the patient is so great that he seldom recovers entirely. In 1841, the cholera, in its most alarming form, that called the spasmodic, broke out in the city of Bangkok, and before noon the next day after its first appearance, upwards of a thousand inhabitants—men, women, and children were numbered with the dead. Such was the virulence of the disease on the second and third days, that relatives and connexions fled from the house infested, leaving the unfortunate victim to perish in all the horrors of solitude and

unquenchable thirsts, and the priests, much against their will (although the more hardy of them laid their hands upon such booty as they found in the houses of the dead), were compelled to fly from house to house with the ostensible motive of succouring the sick and throwing the dead into the river, with weights attached to them, so as to prevent their bodies coming to the surface again before they had been floated far out to sea ; for any rites of sepulture were quite out of the question, when the dead were being numbered by thousands, and neither affection, promises, nor threats could induce any man to approach the house of sickness, much less to handle or carry the stricken corpse.

It was on this occasion that the French Catholic missionaries then resident at Bangkok so much distinguished themselves for their charity and courageous Christian conduct. They had no motives but the purest to induce them to occupy themselves from morning till night, and sometimes even during the whole night, in succouring the sick and dying. Armed with such remedies as they thought most conducive to avert the fatal results of so direful a disease, they plied from house to house endeavouring to heal the suffering body, and to pour comfort and calm into those troubled souls that were so speedily summoned into eternity. To deny that we ourselves did not share in the general panic that reigned around us, would be equivalent to an untruth. It was perhaps true that we possessed more moral courage, and more resignation to the decrees of Providence than our less enlightened neighbours the Siamese, but it was a fearful thing to see the destruction that raged around us ; the blank desolation of many of the houses whose inmates we had been familiar with, and from whence the voice of mirth and merriment had oftentimes resounded. And it was appalling to hear the death-wail wafted over the water as ever and anon this sad signal gave notice that the messenger of death had crossed another threshold.

One grand point to be observed during the cholera is, first cleanliness of the house and of the person; and, secondly, strict attention to confine oneself to good wholesome food properly cooked, and to eschew both vegetables and fruit. I have been more than once in towns where the cholera was committing frightful depredations, and I, on each separate occasion, observed that those who adhered to this regimen, were seldom or never attacked. We, in Mr. Hunter's house, adopted the advice of the French Catholic priests, which was to take the first thing on awaking in the morning a small glass of raw Cognac of the best quality procurable: the next thing to be done was to have breakfast as soon as we were dressed, and none of the doors or windows of the house were opened till the sun had attained a high elevation in the skies. Smoking was strongly recommended, and to have braziers of well burnt charcoal fires in each room in the house, into which, from time to time, a teaspoonful of ground coffee, or a little sugar, was poured, emitting a pleasant aroma, and effectually fumigating the rooms. The last thing on getting into bed, every soul in the house, servants included, was compelled to swallow a hot glass of brandy and water, and then to cover himself over till a violent perspiration burst forth from every pore. This was a species of physicking (I allude to the eatables and drinkables) which would have been the reverse of disagreeable had it not been for the peculiar situation in which we were placed, and which admitted not of a moment's peace of mind or enjoyment. In this state matters continued for nearly a week when the cholera disappeared as suddenly as it had come, leaving the city of Bangkok minus about thirteen thousand of its inhabitants, amongst whom were numbered a few strangers, principally Americans, who, having taken the pledge of total abstinence, could by no argument be induced to adopt the sanitary regulations recommended by the worthy French priests. That the people died in such numbers was as much their own fault as it was their misfortune; unripe fruit, and cucumbers, fish, and

every species of vegetable, were by them devoured with as much avidity as though no such a thing as the cholera ever existed; and what did them more harm than anything else was the detestable laziness of the women, who, to save themselves the trouble of having to cook twice a day, boiled one immense pot of rice at noon, and what remained of this rice, after pouring some water upon it, was kept for the next morning's breakfast; when, cold and turned perfectly sour, it was discussed with, may be, a bit of cocoa-nut and a red chilly, or else a salad of green mangoes, vinegar, and onions.

On the whole, I am inclined to think that the climate of Siam is a salubrious climate, and that with due regard to the construction of the houses, the cleanliness of the streets, and proper attention to the food and clothing of the people, it might vie with the wealthiest towns in India, though this is alas! saying but little for it. For my own part, I would as soon be sent there as to any part of India, if inclined or necessitated to go to India at all; the only preference that I could have in the whole Eastern hemisphere being that little paradise upon earth, *Pulo Penang*, where many of the happiest days of my youth were spent with friends the most sincere I have met with in life.

Siam produces many very excellent vegetables for kitchen use. Amongst these the yams and sweet potatoes are abundant, and of a very fine quality. There is also the moringa, a vegetable tree, the seed pods of which, when green, are commonly used with stewed meats, and in India in curries; then there is the bandicoy or bamiah, the brinjal or badingau, the pepincoy, the snake vegetable, wild spinnach, several different qualities of beans, and, of course, onions and garlic; beyond computation Bangkok is the first place where I ever tasted green garlic in pickles, and I must candidly confess that though long journeyings have made me accustomed to the flavour of this nauseous root when used in small quantities, I liked not the pickled green garlic at all, and the natives were astonished at my bad taste,

Ginger grows abundantly in the neighbourhood of Bangkok, and the natives are as skilled in making preserved and candied ginger as the Chinese themselves. There are many other little conserves and preserves in which the Siamese equally excel, such as the rose leaf, the lime blossom, and the candied lime and citron, but these latter are brought to Bangkok from towns in the interior, which it was never my good luck to visit, my rambles having been confined to within a few miles of the capital itself and in exploring the shores and islands on both sides of the gulf called Cambogia.

I heard that the tea plant was being successfully cultivated at a place some sixty miles distant from Yuthia, but for the truth of this assertion I cannot vouch, as I never saw any samples exhibited at Bangkok, and I never could induce the other Europeans to make up a party to explore the interior, which was, during my stay, in rather a troubled state, owing to the taxes levied upon the villages and towns having rather exceeded in amount what they had been heretofore accustomed to pay.

TEA PLANT.

CHAPTER VI.

The Prince Chou-Faa.—His friendship for the English.—His desire for knowledge.—Drill of his artillery soldiers.—Terrible effect of a man-of war's salute.—The Prince's skill in making and repairing watches.—His melancholy and its causes.—His wives and children.—Account of a carouse at his palace on Christmas day, 1840.—Siamese game of battledoor and shuttlecock.—Chinese theatrical performance.—Sketch of the drama.—The Christmas dinner.—Visits to the temples of the White Elephants.—Description of the watts.—The two elephants.

HE most singular inhabitant of Siam, and one laying claim to the highest praise, is Prince Chou-Faa. Born under the most inauspicious star, and subject to the jealous eye of the King, his every action watched and reported at court, yet he has contrived to find time and opportunity to cultivate his naturally clever mind, till he shines forth a perfect wonder of education and intellectual attainments. He was always kindly disposed towards foreigners, but especially towards the English, and sought to cultivate the friendship of Mr. Hunter, who reciprocated it most cordially. From Mr. Hunter the Prince first acquired some slight knowledge of the English language, and through his aid procured such elementary books as laid the foundation of his educational course; his ardent love of study made him devour the contents of these volumes with the greatest avidity, and, not

contented with limiting himself to a simple course of instruction, he procured books of mathematics and fortification, puzzled his brains with gunnery, the art of casting guns and cannons ; and eventually, after a wonderful struggle against the many difficulties that surrounded him—amongst which not the least was the want of efficient masters, and, indeed, oftentimes any masters at all—emerged from the shell of a rough, unpolished Siamese, into what he was when I was in Siam—an indubitably clever scholar, and a perfect gentleman.

His thirst for literature was then greater than ever ; all the latest publications he, by means of agents, procured from Singapore, and I have seen him laugh as heartily over Dickens's "Pickwick," as though he had been accustomed to the scenes that book depicts from his earliest youth ; but he frittered not his whole time away in the pursuit of any single occupation—his time was allotted into different portions. The first occupation of a morning was drilling his small band of artillery soldiers. The ground allotted for this practice was just beyond the walls of his castle, a level piece of ground running parallel with the banks of the river, on which his Majesty, the King, had caused some pieces of cannon to be placed, as a wise precaution to guard himself from the invasion of foes by water, quite forgetting the fact of his own palace, on the opposite side of the banks, being just situated in a position to be blown into atoms at the first fire. Of course the manœuvres gone through by the Prince's men were entirely harmless, as even blank powder was never used, lest the report should shake the nerves of his Majesty's fifteen hundred wives, and ruffle his own by no means sweetest of dispositions.

A very ludicrous incident of this description occurred whilst I was at Bangkok. The "Sir Walter Scott," one of his Siamese Majesty's sloops of war, happened then to be commanded by a rather hair-brained Irishman. Returning once from a cruise off the west coast of Cambogia, and sailing majestically up the river, wind and tide in favour, towards her moorings off the palace,

and passing Mr. Hunter's house, where the British flag was proudly waving, the day being Sunday, she hove back her sails all of a sudden, and fired a salute of twenty-one guns; this happened at about one p.m., when most of the inhabitants are generally taking a siesta. The effect was most electrical, before the echo of the last gun had subsided, the river was thickly dotted with canoes, flying in all directions, and running into each

ESPLANADE AT PRINCE CHOU-FAA'S PALACE.

other, and causing a hundred other mishaps in their confusion. As for the old King, his fear only exceeded his rage; it was with the greatest difficulty he was prevented from inflicting a very summary vengeance on Captain M——, viz., that of having him sent out of the kingdom at a minute's warning. Mr. Hunter, however, who was one of the peers of the realm, succeeded in assuaging his wrath.

But to return to the Prince Chou-Faa: he regularly every morning went through this mimic exercise, and really, to do him credit, with amazing precision. After drill, his little squad marched, with himself at the head of them, back to the barracks,

which were built within the precincts of the little white-washed fortress that surrounded his palace. A halt was called, and the soldiers divesting themselves of their uniform, and clad in a decidedly light costume, resumed the line of march to that part where the Prince had constructed a little armoury, a perfect little bijou of a place, so neat and cleanly kept, that the muskets and sabres which were therein fantastically arranged, glittered again and dazzled one's eyes with their brightness, as the morning sun shone in upon them through the open windows. All these were brought out and duly scoured; but such was the punctuality of this operation, that the men had but little fatigue, in removing whatever stray atoms of dust might have collected upon them. This completed their morning's work, and they were dismissed to their respective apartments, or to return to their floating homes if they chose till the next morning. The Prince had some favourites that had picked up a little splattering of English, and assisted him in his more scientific amusements. Opposite the armoury, and just on the very threshold of his palace, was a very pretty little frame-house, surrounded with glass windows, and over the entrance-door to which was placed a board with the inscription of "*Watches and Clocks made and repaired here*," written in large letters of gold, and here would he be seen, seated at a table that was liberally bestrewed with fragments and little mites of wheels, pursuing his favourite occupation of watchmaker. It was a strange sight in such an out-of-the-way place as Bangkok, and amongst such a set of uncouth beings as the Siamese, to come suddenly upon the strange figure the Prince presented with a pair of huge goggles protruding from his eyes, and surrounded by a group of inquisitive and inquiring favourites. Watch-making and repairing were generally over about the time that the King's trumpet gave notice that he had had breakfast, and then the Prince retired to the harem, to partake of that pleasant meal also. But he was a frugal man, and was never long seated at meals, except upon such occasions as he had any Europeans to

dine with him, and then he adopted the English fashion of sitting long at table.

Prince Chou-Faa would generally spend an hour or more in his library, which was well and even handsomely fitted up, and contained some valuable books on various topics of literature and science; and of an evening a little exercise, either on horseback or a row up the river, to inhale the fresh and invigorating evening breeze—never more precious, or which none can better enjoy than those subjected to the relaxing heats of an Indian clime. Night closed in, and the Prince, in his brilliantly lighted palace, partook of tea and bread and butter, "*à l'Anglaise*," and billiards, cards, or bagatelle filled up the vacuum between tea-time and ten o'clock, the hour at which Chou-Faa invariably retired for the night. Occasionally, and especially if any Europeans were passing the evening with him, the Prince gave us a tune on the flute, for amongst his really manifold accomplishments he was a good musician, and I have heard him execute "*De con Fe*," with variations, in a style to be by no means sneered at.

One might imagine that surrounded as Chou-Faa was with all the necessaries, and many of the luxuries of life, he must have been a happy and contented man; but those who knew him and watched his oft contracted brow could tell a very different tale. There was a slumbering sorrow there that would ever and anon burst forth like to some troubled dream, and spread a gloom over his usually smiling countenance. He evidently strove often and hard to overcome the theme that haunted him through day, and week, and month, and year; but it burst forth amidst his happiest and most joyous moments, and he felt that, notwithstanding all the gaudy tinsel that surrounded him, he was *de facto a state prisoner*, watched and guarded by the hateful eye of jealousy, and never for two consecutive moments certain of what fate the capricious temperament of the King might doom him to. The doctor who, by the King's commands, was dancing perpetual attendance at the Prince's heels, and who insisted on the Prince

swallowing an allotted allowance of medicine monthly, was an all-sufficient drawback to his highness's happiness, and had he not possessed that humane, gentle disposition for which he was ever distinguished, I imagine this bugbear of a doctor would have had to swallow all his own medicine, in addition to something, perhaps, not quite so harmless.

The Prince Chou-Faa was an exceedingly good husband and father : his favourite princess, and one or two of the others, often in the sacred precincts of the harem, sat down to meals and ate with him—a fact unprecedented in the kalends of Siamese domestic economy. His eldest son, whom he had christened, or at least called, Prince George, he was bringing up under the iron rod of control, and I have little doubt that (if he be alive) he has now grown up to be a fine, well-educated young man. Chou-Faa on several occasions admitted us to his harem, and two of his favourite wives used to converse with us fluently in English. They could, however, neither read nor write.

On Christmas-day, 1840, the Prince Chou-Faa invited all the Europeans then residing at Bangkok to spend the day at his palace, and wind up with a grand Christmas dinner, to be served at precisely 4 p.m. This invitation included the officers and mates of all the merchant vessels then in the river, and the American and French missionaries : these latter, however, declined the invitation, and it was well they did so, for of all the carousals I ever witnessed (and one sees rare specimens of these at some of the military messes in India), I never saw one to surpass that at Bangkok. The party began arriving at the palace at about 10 a.m., and by eleven we were all assembled. There happened to be two English vessels in the river at the time, and three Bombay traders, and these, in addition to the Siamese men-of-war, furnished a pretty decent number of Englishmen. I think we sat down to dinner somewhat about thirty in number. Amongst the crews of the English vessels we mustered a couple of fiddlers, a hautboy, a flute, a fife, and a

drummer, and, with this *magnificent band*, commenced the business of the day with the British National Anthem. Everybody joined in chorus, and though the music was execrable, and the singing alarmingly out of time, we got through it on the whole remarkably well. The ladies, or rather princesses, had a place partitioned off, through which, by aid of eyelet holes, they were spectators of this, to them so novel a spectacle; and it was worth a good deal to see the cats in the palace, tearing about, tail up in the air, as the first burst of our discordant orchestra fell like a thunder-peal on their astonished and alarmed ears. Jigs, reels, country-dances, and Highland flings were all executed to admiration, and several who could not dance a reel in the morning were seen reeling at a later period of the day. At about one o'clock we had a glorious spread in the shape of a *déjeûner à la fourchette*, laid out in the court-yard under the cool shade of a pandal, a species of temporary balcony consisting of a lot of dried grass introduced between a trellis-work of split bamboos, and elevated over head by means of posts driven into the ground, to the tops of which the four corners are fastened. Champagne *ad libitum* was poured down our throats, and though it was not *frappée* it was deliciously cool, from the process adopted in India of standing the bottles in saltpetre and salt and water. After breakfast we amused ourselves as best we could, and even resorted to leap-frog for want of a better amusement: the occasional bungling clumsiness of some less skilful jumper, who would topple himself and his "*back*" over, was a source of great mirth to the Prince and the other native spectators, to whom the game was a perfect novelty, and the ill-suppressed titterings behind the screen plainly evinced that the ladies were enjoying the fun as much as any of us. Our resources at length failing us, and fatigued, and weary, we sat down upon the sofas placed around, and then the Prince called upon some of his own people to put their skill to the test, and keep the ball going, and what think ye was the first game they had? Battledoor and shuttlecock!

but played in such a scientific and skilful way as only the Siamese can.

About thirty young men stood in a circle; the shuttlecock was exactly such an one as we have in England, but the battledoor was the sole of the foot! I never witnessed such remarkable agility in my life as was displayed by these lads; one threw the shuttlecock to some one opposite, the young man near whom it would threaten to alight instantly prepared himself to receive it, and wheeling sharply round, would kick his right leg up so scientifically and correctly, that the shuttlecock would just alight on the centre of the sole of his foot, and rebound with amazing elasticity, being caught by the next person it approached in precisely the same style, and in this method I have seen the game kept up for nearly a space of ten minutes without the shuttlecock once falling to the ground. I once attempted to imitate the young Siamese in their method of playing this game, but failed signally in the attempt, though I nearly succeeded in putting my ankle out of joint. After this there was a good deal of wrestling and gymnastics, and then we had a Siamese dance, resembling much in its uncouth gestures the savage war dance of the South Sea Islanders. This was succeeded by a sham boxing match between two English tars, but the Prince had been so liberal in supplying these worthies with poteen, that they soon forgot the sham part of the business, and set to work in right good earnest, tooth and nail; and it required our conjoint efforts to separate the combatants. The amusements of the day concluded with a Chinese theatrical performance, a perfect novelty to many of the European spectators present. The theatre had been temporarily erected, and there was no scenery except the drop scene. In the centre of the stage there was a circular tent, or rather the tent walls without the top part, or any other covering. This was supposed to represent some unknown fortress in some unheard-of land, the gates of which were facing the audience. In the distance behind this fortress were seen approaching some twenty painted and armed

SIAMESE GAME OF SHUTTLECOCK.

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uncouth-looking warriors; these were meant to represent a besieging army, and inside the fortress were the unhappy besieged inhabitants, as yet invisible to us; but as a matter of course undergoing all the frightful privations of a long siege; at a given signal the attack commenced; the shouting of the approaching army, and the beating of gongs was awful in the extreme; it was enough to break the tympanum of the ears, and instinct led us simultaneously to cram our fingers into those tender orifices for fear of a disastrous result. At length amidst this most unearthly riot, out rushed the poor starved garrison, consisting of a very old man with a long white woolly beard, who, in a bundle suspended to a stick over his shoulders supposed to contain very costly treasures, was bolting from the town, ere the besiegers should force an entrance; then came a very old woman with some pots and pans, then a young man with a musket, and a young girl with a basket, and then some half-dozen children with nothing particular but their ragged clothing, and of this in all conscience they possessed little enough. These constituted the undauntable garrison of that invincible citadel now about to be ransacked by the ruthless besiegers. The besieged fled panic-struck in every direction, the citadel was carried by main force, and the enemy's army having gained possession, carried off the walls victoriously on their shoulders—a very delightful, though rather unusual method of disposing of a stronghold, and one which it would require an army of Atlases to perform. The curtain dropped amidst a very whirlwind of applause, and shouting; and this was the first Chinese play I ever witnessed, and certainly the last I should ever wish to see, for me-thinks a continuation of such noises for a succession of nights would render one unfit for anything but Hanwell, Bedlam always excepted.

Dinner was now announced, and we were introduced into an apartment which none of us had ever before witnessed, and which surpassed in splendour our utmost expectations; it was an elegantly tapestried room, lighted by three costly chandeliers:

on the sideboard, which was almost entirely of ivory, stood several massive and chastely wrought gold and silver vases, evidently of Chinese origin, and the centre was occupied by a clock representing a crystal fountain, whose waters were continually set in motion by the working of the machinery of the clock. Against the walls were suspended some very chaste oil-coloured views: two in particular invited our admiration; they were called twilight and dawn, and for mellowness of tint and softness of outline, I have seldom seen them rivalled. The long mahogany table covered with a snow-white damask cloth, was literally groaning under the rich display of plate and glass ware, and when the covers were removed, the savoury incense that steamed up from them made our appetites remember that we had not yet dined. A very desirable state of affairs, provided such a princely meal were always at one's command. It was, indeed, a sumptuous repast! Most sumptuous. There were divers very excellent soups to commence with, and then came turkeys, and geese, and ducks, and fowls, and roast sucking pigs, and many other incentives to appetite, setting aside that best of all Indian luxuries, prawn and rabbit curries; and we looked upon these and partook of them, and sighed to think that there was such a thing as to-morrow in the question, with its accompanying headaches and indigestions, and that terrible drawback to enjoyment—to wit the cholera. *N'importe*, we had good wines, aye, the best of old crusty wines, to wash down the good things and assist digestion, so I sang to myself like the famed *Edgardo* in the *Borgia*—

"Non curiamo lincerto domani,
Si quest oggi ci dato go'dare."

I believe every one present thought like myself, even the Prince included, for we made sad havoc amongst those viands, and as for the wines, the port, the golden sherry, the sparkling burgundy, it would have been an insult to one's arithmetic, to have counted the empty bottles after the dinner was fairly done.

The cloth was removed, the fruits and sweets produced, and toasting commenced. Mr. Hunter proposed "the King of Siam," which was responded to with three times three. The Prince returned thanks, and, in a very neat speech, gave "The Queen of Great Britain and Ireland," &c.; then he rose again to propose "The Queen of Portugal," and the Portuguese Consul gave "The Prince" himself; and the enthusiasm with which this toast was received must have been very gratifying to his feelings, knowing, as he well knew, how universally he was respected and esteemed by the Europeans then at Siam. After this, there was some more toasting, and any quantity of Maraschino and other liqueurs, and then some of the bolder volunteered a song, the Prince, with evident glee, joining in the interminable *toroloral* choruses.

Chou-Faa, who was then about thirty-eight years of age, and wore on that occasion a full-dress naval uniform with epaulettes, and buttons on which an elephant figured in lieu of the crown, is, or, at least, was, a rather handsome man for a Siamese, of middle stature, dark complexion, and an extremely well and strongly-built figure.

At this distant period, I still look back with delight to the few pleasant hours of that Christmas spent in a Siamese capital, at the hospitable table of a Siamese Prince, and it now appears, as it then did to me, almost incredible to think that in the very centre of almost savages, and in a land but little heard of or known, there is to be found such an enlightened character as the excellent Prince Chou-Faa.

The Prince sent us home at an early hour in his own state-barge; and when the cawings of the thievish crows awoke me from my pillow next morning, the events of the preceding day appeared like an imaginary phantom, conjured up by some spell to puzzle and perplex one for the remainder of our pilgrimage on earth.

Curiosity, assisted by a special permit, induced me once during my sojourn at Bangkok, to visit those two most

remarkable edifices in the whole empire of Siam—the Watts or Temples of the two White Elephants—those most revered of all the Siamese deities, and which, as the cross in the Christian and the crescent in the Moslem, floats proudly for the Siamese in the banner of their nation. An elephant is certainly more terribly emblematical of the oppressive yoke of tyranny than anything

VIEW OF A WATT, OR TEMPLE.

that I know of; at least, in my own humble opinion, I would rather be trodden under foot by any other quadruped, were I reduced to the miserable extremities of such an unenviable choice.

The watts themselves were very fine buildings, replete with all the gorgeous beauties of oriental architecture. The first or chief watt, the residence of the largest of these two rare and beautiful creatures, is situated on the east bank of the river Menam,

about half a mile from the shore, and in the centre of a garden, deliciously scented with the tube-rose, the yellow honeysuckle, and that rare specimen of the passion-flower, called by the Siamese the "*bell-flower*," from its very great resemblance to a bell. On either side of the watt were two huge *Banian* trees, evidently of long growth, from the great number of shoots that had taken firm root in the ground, and were now forming different and distinct branches of their own. Under these trees, a whole posse of Siamese priests, clad in gamboge-dyed dresses, were chaunting laudatory verses about the great white elephant, and, with the exception of one malevolent glare at us as we entered the highly-finished gates of the walls that enclosed the gardens of the watts, they took no further notice of our proceedings, but allowed us to go round the garden unmolested, picking such rich bouquets as would make the heart of a ball-going young London lady palpitate again with joy and excitement. After a lapse of about a quarter of an hour, which was pleasantly enough spent in surveying the outside of the watt, its thousand pretty pedestals, and as many indescribable and singular little images, a venerable-looking old fellow, clad in a most remarkably brilliant yellow surplice, who wore a smile of satisfaction upon his face, which plainly indicated that he had been well-fee'd by our attendant Cicerone, came forward and offered to conduct us into the presence of White Elephant, the senior. We closely followed our guide, and were admitted into the presence of this noble animal. I have never before seen so large an elephant; his skin was as smooth and spotless and white as the driven snow, with the exception of a large scarlet rim round the eyes. The brute was too dignified and accustomed to homage to pay the slightest attention to the intrusion of such unpresuming visitors as ourselves, but went on calmly helping himself to leaves and branches from the mighty piles that were heaped up before him. The room itself was an unpresuming one, exceedingly lofty, with windows all round the loftiest part; but the flooring was covered with a mat-work, wrought *of pure*

chased gold, each interwoven seam being about half an inch wide, and about the thickness of a half sovereign ! ! ! If this was not *sin to snakes*, as the Yankees say, I don't know what was. The idea of a great unwieldy brute, like the elephant, trampling under foot and wearing out more gold in one year than many hard-working people gain in ten ! And then the soiled mess that this costly carpeting was in, in many parts, would have been sufficient to cause a miser to go off instantly into a fit of insanity. Several priests were busily engaged, in different parts of the room, polishing up tarnished spots ; others, professionally goldsmiths, were extracting the worn strips, and replacing them with new ones, so heavy and so bright, that it made our eyes and mouths water to see such infamous waste. Every one to his liking, however. The sovereigns and potentates of Europe manage to make millions slip through their fingers in the pursuits of the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and in indulging every appetite that vicious nature can give birth to. The King of Siam would doubtless do the same if he could ; but he can't, for this simple reason, that so limited are the resources for gratification and pleasure, and so cheaply obtainable these few, that his Majesty, who does not spend much in wearing apparel, turns his treasures into mats for his favourite doll or deity to tread upon. The man who was so fortunate as to entrap this elephant, got from the King of Siam a pension of one thousand tikols per annum, which pension is hereditary ; besides this, he was raised to a very high office in the kingdom, that of carrying water for the elephant to slake his thirst with ; and the jars in which the water is transported, and the trough from which this leviathan drinks, are both more or less filagreed and worked with gold. The elephants are the only dignitaries connected with the court that are permitted to breakfast before his Majesty, and if they don't get it early, they roar for it in a very appalling manner. The elephant's trumpeting must certainly drown the feeble cracked notes of the king's bugler. These creatures seldom or never leave their cells except upon stated feast days, when they

head a procession that marches round their respective watt some half-dozen times, and they are then re-led to their stately couch.

The white elephant junior differed from the white elephant senior considerably in size and appearance, and consequently luxuriated in silver instead of gold. He was evidently the younger son of a junior branch of the family, and was accordingly neglected and ill-treated. Even the priests neglected to repair the rents in his silver matting, which was fast going to pieces, and if one might judge from the meagre and sickly look of the poor animal, it was not likely to live long enough to tread upon a new. The watt in which this poor brute was confined was also insignificant in comparison with the other, and the garden, though abounding with flowers, was evidently ill looked after and neglected. This problem is easily solved by the fact, that the king is in the daily habit of attending the other watt, and his fifteen hundred wives supply themselves with bouquets therefrom ; whereas this watt has never seen the stout shadow of His Majesty since the first installation of the ill-conditioned elephant.

CHAPTER VII.

Chanti Boon.—Its situation and buildings.—Account of the attempt of a Chinese Captain to run away with a richly laden Siamese Government trader.—Mode of conducting business at Chanti Boon.—Adventure with the Siamese officer of Customs.—Monkeys and snakes.—Description of the country.—Siamese cookery.—The White Ant and the Cobra di Capello.—Use of the ant hills by the latter.—Feeding of the Cobra by the natives.—Tringano.—Passage across Siamese Gulf.—Encounter with a whirlwind.—Bardia.—Champoon.—Effect of a salute of twenty-one guns.—Collection of tribute from the Rajah.—Return voyage.

CHANTI Boon is beyond a doubt situated in one of the wealthiest provinces of Siam. Insignificant in appearance and size, the only buildings of note in the town consist of a watt with a remarkably elegant spire, and a huge government magazine for the warehousing of the more valuable products, which are bi-annually shipped to Bangkok for sale and exportation. In the intervals between the two monsoons, Siamese ships of war and junks, with government supercargoes, are employed on this service, as the cargoes are of too valuable a nature to be entrusted to the Chinese or other traffickers. These could easily smuggle portions of the ivory, gamboge, spices, &c., on board vessels lying at anchor along the coast or off the bar of Siam, where they could be readily and advantageously disposed of; and

should a Chinese junk once contain so valuable and costly a freight, the chances are ten to one that she would take a directly opposite direction to Bangkok, and proceed with all available dispatch to Singapore or Canton, or for whichever port the wind chanced to be favourable; and the funds obtained by the disposal of one single cargo would enable the runaways to be independent for life, and quitting the sea, to enjoy their *otium cum dig.* in undisturbed tranquillity on shore. An instance of this kind, I was informed, had occurred many years before my visit to Siam, which, however, fortunately for the Siamese government, had ended in the recapture of the fugitive junk, which was reconducted to Bangkok, and there confiscated. The affair happened thus. The Siamese government being anxious before the setting in of the monsoon to clear the warehouse at Chanti Boon of all the produce of that season, and being short of ships of their own nation to import it into Bangkok, were compelled to charter several small foreign vessels for this purpose, and amongst others a Chinese junk, the owner and captain of which had been for many years a regular trader to Bangkok, and who was reported to be a most honest and upright man. Accordingly, being duly arrived and anchored off the little island of Semsing, at the mouth of the Chanti Boon river, a distance of about twenty miles from the town, boats were despatched to bring off the cargo, and the Chinaman was at work, morning, noon, and night, endeavouring to be loaded as quickly as possible, so as to be away before the coming monsoon. His cargo consisted almost entirely of ivory, gamboge, and cardamums. The indefatigable zeal of the captain so impressed the Siamese authorities on board (of whom there were three) in his favour, that they placed the most implicit confidence in his integrity; and before the vessel was entirely laden, quitted the irksome office of keeping *tally*, to relax themselves by a walk, or a shooting party on shore. The old captain was as punctual as clockwork in handing over a correct list of what had been shipped each day to the functionaries when they came on board of an evening; and

as these latter were very regular in obtaining this information from the shippers on shore before coming off, they found, on comparing notes, that both sides perfectly agreed as to quantity, &c.; a state of affairs highly gratifying to their feelings, and which led them to make to the fat old skipper many stout promises of rewards and honours to be heaped upon him on their safe return to Bangkok by their august master, His Majesty the King of Siam. The Chinaman used to chuckle at these rewards in perspective amazingly; and finally, having laden a full and complete cargo of costly materials, proposed to those high functionaries that they should celebrate the occasion by a species of jubilee, to be held on shore at the small and almost deserted village of Paknam, near Chanti Boon.* Well, no sooner said than done, the proposal was jumped at by the Siamese dignitaries, and half-a-dozen ducks, a couple of fowls, and a pig fell victims to their ambition for pleasure parties. It is needless to say that that indispensable article of all pic-nics, *spirits*, were handed round and partaken *ad libitum*, and of all vile potations, that vilest, called *samshoe*—a spirit distilled from rice, and which is more speedy and certain in its destructive and intoxicating effects than all the rum and brandy in the universe put together. Merrily the bowl passed round, and the feast continued with unalloyed enjoyment till nigh upon sunset. Then the effects of the merry-making became distinctly visible from the decks of the junk, where the sober and clear-headed crew, under instructions from their captain, were attentively watching the issue of events. Presently one man got up, and staggered, and fell against his neighbour, rolling the latter over in his fall. These two were settled for the night, nothing under a miracle could awaken them to a sense of consciousness. The third and sole remaining officer seeing the mishap, which was in all probability, in the

* It is strange that the first town on entering the Menam is also called Paknam, and from this circumstance, and the word "*Onam*" meaning water, in Siamese, I am led to suppose that the name must have some relative signification to the position of the two villages.

then addled state of his brain, metamorphosed into a mighty combat between countless warriors that were swimming around him, shouted lustily for aid, and with one mighty effort leapt to his feet only to feel his head seized with an overpowering giddiness, which felled him to the earth as a butcher fells an ox. This was the signal for activity on board the junk; the boat was lowered and manned; the captain, who still retained his senses (for he could drink any dozen ordinary men under the table, or, more properly speaking in this instance, upon the grass), was rowed safely on board, the land-wind set in as the night closed round, the anchor was weighed, and over that dark sea, with a favouring breeze, the junk sped rapidly on towards—not Bangkok, but Singapore! What became of the three wretched men who were left on that desolate island is more than I can divine, not the slightest clue having been ever obtained as to their fate. They dared not show themselves at Chanti Boon or Bangkok, where their doom, they well knew, was a lingering but certain death. As to the junk, it arrived safely at Singapore, and things went on prosperously enough with the Chinaman and his crew, till one morning, by some unlucky accident, a Siamese cruiser came into the harbour, and the commander recognising the vessel, went on board to claim acquaintance with his old friend, the skipper, when, to his utter astonishment, he found the decks strewed with produce, the loss of which had been reported to him by a vessel he had encountered at sea bound from Siam to China. The Chinese, conscious of their guilt, though the Siamese captain made no allusion to the event, wisely effected their escape to shore, so soon as darkness sheltered them; and not long after the commander of the Siamese ship of war, accompanied by an armed force, boarded the junk, and finding her entirely deserted, got his own ship under weigh, and without resistance towed the junk out to sea; then manning her from picked men out of his own crew, the junk sailed in convoy of the cruiser direct for Bangkok, where in due course they arrived, to the infinite satisfaction of the Siamese monarch,

who liberally remunerated the officers and men of the lucky cruiser.

From that date suspicion has ever been on the alert as regards strangers of all nations, and now-a-days no freights are brought from Chanti Boon except on board of a Siamese vessel of war, and even then innumerable emissaries accompany the ships. The Sir Walter Scott was sent on this mission when I was at Bangkok, and I accompanied her more out of curiosity than from any other motive. A fine fresh breeze came off the land at about eight p.m., and we weighed and made all possible sail, keeping as near the land as safety would permit. The water was smooth, and the moon shone brightly as we glided swiftly but almost imperceptibly through the water. The distance from the anchorage to Cape Liant is exactly sixty miles, just one degree, and we were abreast of this Cape by seven o'clock in the morning. By hugging close under the shore, we kept a pretty stiff land-breeze with us all the way; and when the Cape was abaft the beam, we hauled the vessel up, and took in her studding-sails, steering a nearly due East course. The wind never failed us till about noon, when we were nearly abreast of the island of Koh Samet, an island twenty-five miles distant from Cape Liant, and from which, to the anchorage off *Semsing*, at the mouth of the river of Chanti Boon, there yet remained a distance of forty-five miles to accomplish. The calm was intense, and the heat stifling, whilst myriads of annoying flies and stinging gnats came buzzing in idle circles round our heads. This state of affairs continued till four o'clock, when the first puff of the welcome sea breeze, that for more than an hour had been tantalising us by rippling the cool-looking blue waves in the distance beyond the Cape, came like a gentle angel, whispering comfort to our parched and fevered frames. The yards were soon braced round, and in half an hour's time we were once more sporting merrily through the waves; but the sun set, and the night came on, and the moon shone again calmly on the waters,

and we had yet a good half degree to make before arriving at the anchorage ; so I went to bed, and the only thing that disturbed my slumbers that night was the shaking of the ship as the heavy chain rattled heavily over her bows, sure and happy intimation that the careful navigator had brought the ship safely to her journey's end.

I turned out next morning, ripe with expectation, and went on deck. The cool, perfumed morning air was delightful and invigorating; the gentle murmuring of the waves as they rippled over the pebble-strewed beach, was soft, pleasant music to the ear. The solemn silence that reigned around was only interrupted by the occasional scream of the sea-hawk, or the splash of the waters as the keen-eyed kingfisher plunged into the wave in pursuit of its morning's meal. The scenery around was wild and picturesque ; and the lofty three-hundred-peaked mountains in the distance, seemed to verge imperceptibly into the cloudless azure skies of that clime. Beyond this, there was nothing ! no stir of life, no boats, no ships—not even a fisherman : but there was a quiet, happy, peaceful charm about the place at that early hour of the day, that made one, not sad, but pensive, and turned stray thoughts from the current of their every-day worldly course, into a channel more meet for mankind ; it brought the creature to think of the Creator, and lifted up the soul to exclaim with the psalmist, " O Lord, how manifold are thy works ! in wisdom hast thou made them all. The earth is full of thy riches."

After breakfast, the best boat in the ship was rigged out as a cutter, and the captain, supercargoes, and myself, set sail in her for the town of Chanti Boon. There were two channels round the island, which is situated exactly opposite to the mouth of the river, and the tide was running round either side like a perfect sluice. We had quite a job to keep the boat from being stranded ; and it required the combined force of the sails and oars to keep us anywhere near mid-channel ; but when we once got fairly round the island, then we were swept with amazing

velocity right into the centre of the river, and so floated up. The land at the entrance was very low, marshy ground, teeming with rank weeds and innumerable noisy croaking frogs. Now and then a solitary crane poked his astonished head over the grass, and, sadly alarmed at such an apparition as a boat, gave utterance to a croak of surprise, and flew heavily across the river to the opposite side. In the midst of all this desolation,

ENTRANCE TO CHANTI BOON RIVER.

was one solitary miserable hut, perched high up in the air on the stumps of four very lofty cocoa-nut trees; and at the door of this hut, when we passed, was seated its sole occupant and lord and master, an old shrivelled-up man, with hardly a rag to cover his nakedness, and who, to all appearance, had planted himself there about the same period that the trees which supported his cabin had sprung up, and had simultaneously with

them gone to decay. He was busily engaged pounding up the betel-nut composition for mastication (for he and his teeth had long since parted company) when we first saw him, but no sooner did he catch a glimpse of our boat than he seemed, as if by inspiration, to be endowed with all the energies of a lad of sixteen ; he flung away his betel-nut, slipped down the ladder with marvellous celerity, flew to his little canoe, launched, and was busy paddling after us, in less time than it has taken me to write this. Loudly and authoritatively did he shout to us to stop ; and when at last, for sheer curiosity's sake, we hove the boat to, to hold parley with him, the fierce little old fellow, so soon as he had recovered his breath, attacked us like a royal tiger. "What!" said he, "do you Franks dare to break the laws of this country, and set my authority at defiance, in broad daylight?—I, who am the custom-house officer and reporter-general, without whose permit no one is allowed to pass up this river! I have three loaded muskets," said he, holding up his fingers to indicate that there was no mistake about their number, "and it's a mercy that in my anger I did not fire upon and kill you all!" Excessive was the old man's wrath to find that we were highly amused, and laughed at his threats. After a little while, however, he saw it was useless, and so went on another tack, begging and imploring us not to go up before he had reported our arrival to the governor ; for although it was simply a form to be gone through, still the non-performance of this office might cost him his post, and that would break his heart ; for apart from his having no means to support himself, and being without friends or family, twenty years' usage had so accustomed him to the dear cot on that lovely spot he inhabited, that his being separated from and obliged to quit it, would bring his grey head in sorrow down to the mud, and cause him to lie down and die amidst his bosom friends and old companions, the frogs. Compassionating the poor old fellow, we agreed to take him on board of our boat, and tow his little canoe up with us till within a short distance of Chanti Boon,

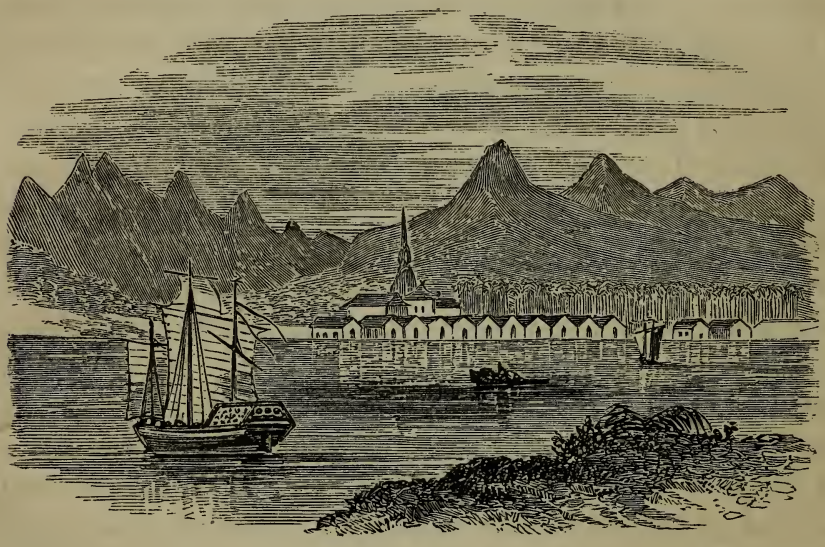
when we would despatch him ahead, and land, and breakfast somewhere on the banks of the river, till his return.

No monkey or parroquet was ever more chatty or noisy than this old worthy. He gave us to understand that all the twenty years that he had been in that hut, he had never had any friendly intercourse with human beings; relatives he had none; he was generally wont of a morning to sally forth in his canoe and reconnoitre the anchorage, but by some strange hazard he had this day put off his diurnal trip, perfectly persuaded in his own mind that no stranger had arrived, for ships had never during his experience touched at this point, and junks always announced their near approach by the most frightful dinning noise of gongs; hence his surprise was only to be equalled by his consternation when he first caught sight of our vessel. Strange old piece of humanity! His salary was somewhere about a ticol a month, equal to half-a-crown sterling, and upon this and the occasional charity of passers-by, he had long subsisted, but then he was cunning in herbs and knew where to go in the forest to look for wild yams and other roots, and not unfrequently in these foraging excursions he stumbled across a wild boar, and sometimes a bear; the sole inmates of his hut, he assured us, were an old cat and a tame rat. Fowls he had given up keeping, for they used to stray away from his vast domain, and get whipped off by hungry jackals, or the wild cat of the jungle. The greatest imaginable boon that could be conferred upon this old fellow was tobacco, and powder and shot. The former he smoked incessantly; the latter brought him in an occasional meal of meat, and he had only to watch from his cabin door of a morning, just about daybreak, when all the wild fowl of the jungle came down to the water's edge to quench their thirst, to enable him with facility to get a good shot at a partridge, or what is better still, a fine jungle cock. He was also an expert fisherman, so that the only provisions he laid by in store were rice, ghee (melted butter), onions, garlic, and salt—those five indispensables of an Oriental's

life. The jungle afforded him firewood enough to roast himself with, and the river quenched his thirst; he assured us he had never known an hour's sickness during the long period of his hermitage, and hardly a moment's discontent, though it was by no means an uncommon event when he was coiled up in his corner of a night to hear the grievous roar of angry tigers contesting under his cabin for the booty afforded by some luckless stag, or a wild goat that had been caught at the water's side. As for snakes, the description he gave of those he had seen was marvellous in the extreme, and though doubtless he exaggerated as to size, &c., I have little doubt in my own mind but that some very ugly customers of this species infested the jungles around. A sure sign of this was the entire absence of monkeys, though the interior was infested with them. Monkeys like not the vicinity of serpents, and I have seen them almost go into fits from excessive alarm at the sight of even a dead snake. Thus the old man enlivened us with tales of his life and adventures, and our little boat progressed rapidly up the stream; the banks were thickly set with mangroves, and there was a species of wild jessamine whose blossom was very delightful, and attracted swarms of bees and very many beautiful butterflies. We could see nothing of the country around us from our low position, and the trip would have been tedious indeed had it not been for the engaging tales of the queer little old custom-house officer. At length we came in sight of the tall elegant spire of the distant watt at Chanti Boon, which was glistening like a diadem of precious stones in the sunlight; five minutes more sailing brought us to a fine open part of the country where the embankments of the river were higher than heretofore, and where lofty tamarind trees grew in abundance. Selecting the most shady of these, we landed, and having dispatched the old man in his diminutive canoe to announce our advent, we bethought ourselves of breakfast, and had it forthwith. The neighbouring country was richly cultivated and strictly guarded, for several of the plants and trees in the neighbourhood were of that class that yield costly gums, amongst

others the gamboge, benzoin, or frankincense ; owing to this, not a cow or any kind of cattle was seen grazing on the rich pasturage, which was profuse indeed, lest they might injure the valuable trees, some of which were saplings that had not long since been planted. The guards, however, were permitted to allow their ponies to graze on these plots, securing them by a chain fastened round the right forefoot and riveted to a peg driven firmly into the ground.

I never saw a country in every respect more fitted for the rearing of the silk-worm than the district of Chanti Boon. The fine alluvial soil was just what would nurture the white



VIEW OF CHANTI BOON.

mulberry, and cause it to attain to great perfection of growth ; and the climate in the spring (the period when we visited it,) was just of that temperature that would best suit the delicate and cautiously reared silk-worm. I am confirmed in this opinion since visiting the silk-reeling districts in Syria, where the worms are oftentimes exposed to those sudden transitions in climate which are altogether unknown in such latitudes as Chanti Boon.

In due time the ogre of a custom-house officer returned with a permit, and if the governor imagined at the time that he granted it that we were on board of the vessel, he must certainly have been unfeignedly surprised to see us so soon make our appearance at his residence. The governor's house was pleasantly situated on the banks of the river, and commanded a fine view of the surrounding country. Unlike the other houses of officials that we had visited in Siam, this one was remarkable for its cleanliness; and the few nights that we slept on shore we revelled in the rare luxury of unexceptionable clean bed linen. Of all Oriental cookery, however, the Siamese is the most execrable and unwholesome; not from the want of the wherewithal to cook (for most certainly the pork and poultry were remarkably fine), but from want of *savoir faire*, and from the abominable practice they have of eating pickled garlic, and flavouring all their dishes strongly with this unsavoury condiment.

Our reception by the Governor of Chanti Boon was vastly different to that afforded to the Père Fontenoy, who accompanied Tachard on his embassy to Siam in 1685, just one hundred and fifty-six years before my visit to that country. Fontenoy went to Chanti Boon, accompanied by some brother Jesuits: he found the town some way inland from the banks of the river. It is now built almost over the water. The very climate and nature of the place seem to have changed, for he talks of the country being flooded for half the year, whereas inundations are now of rare occurrence; in short, the only thing that seems to have kept pace with time are the mosquitoes, of which I had amply disagreeable proof, and of which Fontenoy complains most bitterly.

"Chanti Boon," says the same author, "is situated at the foot of one of that long range of mountains which separates the kingdom of Siam from that of Cambogia." On the side on which the Jesuit party entered it was fortified by an old wooden fortress, more fit, observes Fontenoy, to serve as a protection from the invasion of wild beasts than to serve as a resistance

against the attack of organised troops. Now-a-days, it has become a quiet, thriving, populous mercantile town, every one in and about it wearing the look of affluence and contentment; and such soldiers as reside in the district, or are in cantonment in town, make oftener use of their arms in making those stabs from which the gum called gamboge exudes than in injuring either friend or foe. The natural barrier formed by the lofty range of mountains in the immediate vicinity of Chanti Boon, is a safeguard against the pillaging attacks of the Cochin Chinese, for which the Siamese ought to be very thankful; for without this nothing but a remnant of the large revenue annually yielded would ever enter the Government treasury.

The neighbourhood of Chanti Boon abounds with wild elephants, tigers, chetahs, and a vast variety of wild beasts, reptiles, and insects; of the two latter the most destructive being the cobra de capella and the Indian white ant, the former fatal to the life of man, the latter to his household goods and chattels. 'Tis strange how the cobra de capella avails itself of the industry of that most destructive of all destructive creatures, the white ant. White ants in hordes innumerable, with amazing alacrity, sometimes in the course of a single night, raise up a fabric for their own habitations, and to serve as warehouses for their winter provision of food, often more than two feet high and full twelve feet in diameter. These ant-hills are pierced with an innumerable number of holes, each hole leading to a different department or suite of chambers. On first being raised, this mound of earth is of a very fragile nature, and easily demolished; but a few days baking in the hot sun makes it become so hard and strong, as to be quite proof against the heaviest showers of rain, and to resist many a hard blow from a pickaxe. But before it assumes this consistence, the wary cobra, who is on the look-out for nice airy apartments for his wife and expected family, and is too indolent or unskilled to labour for himself, coolly takes possession of the ant-hill, and whilst it is in a yet mouldable

condition, carves out for himself a large space, in which he thenceforward takes up his position. The moment this unwelcome intruder presents himself, the ants decamp, leaving him in undisturbed possession of their labours. Whenever a Hindoo or a native of Chanti Boon observes one of these moulds erected in a place unpleasantly close to his own domicile, he carefully watches it till he can trace symptoms of the cobra having entered into possession, and then he and his neighbours instantly set to work to construct a strong fence all round it, which is so thickly set with thorn bushes as to render all egress impossible. The snake has no chance of escaping without being impaled, and would consequently die of starvation were it not for the superstitious creed of its incarcerators. These latter make it a religious point of duty to supply the venomous brute each morning with milk, and eggs, and other similar dainties; and in the course of a week or ten days, the cobras, male and female, become so accustomed to regular hours, that, punctual to the minute, they may be seen peeping out of their respective holes, in quiet expectation of their breakfast; and in a very short time they will, without evincing any signs of fear, come forth and partake of the good things let down to them in the presence of ever so many spectators. So much for the belief in the transmigration of souls—a creed highly beneficial to snakes and other nauseous reptiles, who, but for this, as the population spread in the East, would be in the course of time utterly exterminated. Both Siamese and Indians have a strange notion with regard to snails; they pretend to be able to track a snake by them, "for," say they, "they are the snakes' *water-carriers*, and wherever you see the track of a snail on the ground, be sure that a cobra is not far off."

Fontenoy, in speaking of the ants that infest this part of Siam, says:—"The ants, which in Europe construct their dwellings under the earth and retire to them during winter, make their nests and store their provisions in Siam at the tops of the trees, so as to preserve them from the inundations which cover

the earth during five or six months of the year." It was an error to attribute to the floods this peculiarity in the construction of these ants' nests. There are many different qualities or sects of ants in India; and the class here particularly referred to is to be found on the highest as well as lowest ground in India and Siam. The ant that inhabits trees is of a dirty red colour, and possessed of a wofully sharp sting, which makes the wound smart again, as I well know to my cost, and leaves a white bump on the injured part, which smarts and itches alternately for several hours after the wound is inflicted. These ants are invariably found on mango and other fruit trees, and are most destructive enemies to the fruit; their nests are conveniently situated in the branches of the tree, and are composed of two large leaves stitched together in a very surprising manner. I have oftentimes mistaken these nests for those of that beautiful little bird, the purple honeysucker, and had my thirst for birds-nesting severely checked and punished by the fiery, venomous little occupants. All trees yielding gums are also a favourite resort of these red ants, and planters and gardeners are obliged to resort to pitch, which they lay thickly over the stem of valuable trees, to save the fruit and gum from destruction. I can easily understand that Fontenoy should attribute the habits of this little insect to wonderful instinct; for he sought in everything he did or saw, to render praise to the Creator of the Universe; at least, I am led to suppose so from the following passages that occur in his travels, when, after undergoing every imaginable privation and ill, he was compelled to travel barefooted over brambles and thorns, on his way from Chanti Boon to a village near Bangkok. "Il falloit," he exclaims, "marcher par les bois où les occasions de souffrir ne nous manquèrent pas. *Mais nous apprîmes en même-tems que ce n'est pas une chose bien difficile d'aller pieds nuds parmi les cailloux, quand on se propose la gloire de Dieu dans ce genre de vie.*"

We visited the warehouse, where we found men, women, and children hard at work, picking, sorting, and packing cardamums;

others, again, were weighing the ivory and gamboge, and a few carrying down what was ready for shipment to the boats, and the whole presented a busy and pleasing *tableau* that one could hardly hope to see in so outlandish a place as Chanti Boon.

About three days before the Sir Walter Scott had finished loading the produce of Chanti Boon, at Lemsing, for Bangkok, the Siamese frigate, Victory, called in to see how affairs were getting on, and to get water and provisions on board: her ultimate destination was Tringano, the chief town of a province of that name, situated on the east coast of the Malayan Peninsula, in about 5° 20′ North (almost in a parallel with the Island of Penang), and 103° 00′ East. This province had long been tributary to Siam, and the Victory was about to proceed there to collect the annual taxes, but it was Captain S.'s intention to visit and explore several of the islands and harbours on the west coast of the Gulf before proceeding to Tringano; and as he knew that I was very partial to sketching, after my own uncouth fashion, he kindly offered me a passage on board of his vessel, which offer I gladly availed myself of. We accordingly sailed from Lemsing, and steered a direct course across the gulf towards Pulo Bardia and Champon, in the province of Champon. I should have been sorry, indeed, to have found myself in the vicinity of these places in anything but a well-armed and admirably disciplined man-of-war—both of which was the case with the Victory—which, from being the crack ship in the Siamese service, had a crew of picked and chosen men and officers, and everything on board, from the guns to the marline spikes, were the best of their sort procurable. The Siamese Gulf is at all times a turbulent one: I never made a trip of a week's duration without encountering violent squalls, if not a gale. On our passage to Pulo Bardia, just as we had got about half way across the gulf, we were taken aback one morning by one of those violent whirlwind squalls, known in India by the significant name of "*Pishash*," which means in our vernacular his satanic majesty. Lucky, indeed, it is that they are so swift upon the

wing, that you are hardly aware of their presence before they have passed on miles away; it is but the work of a minute, but during that minute the confusion and mischief that ensue are almost incredible. There were we, for instance, gliding peacefully through the water, the waves as calm and contented as our own consciences, for we had just come up from a very excellent breakfast. The man at the wheel was indolently looking up at the main royal haulyards, on which a couple of Java sparrows were endeavouring to gain a footing. The captain walked the poop in the quiet enjoyment of his after-breakfast cigar. I was sitting under the poop-awning trying to sketch off the old Chinese carpenter, whilst that inoffensive and unconscious individual, lost in contemplation and the huge brim of a large straw hat, was leaning over the starboard bulwark gazing intently into the sea. The serang was busy forward instructing the younger hands in the art of splicing and reeving. The tindal was trying to catch fish; one or two men were up aloft greasing the masts and tarring the rigging. The black cook, in the blacker-looking galley, was turning white like iron from heat, and fanning himself with the wing of a chicken that he had just slaughtered. The officer of the watch was out on the bowsprit; and a couple of pigs that were permitted to run about the decks had found a nice cool berth under the shady side of the galley. As for the poultry in the long boat, they were perfectly overcome by the heat, and no sound issued from their retreat, save the occasional squeak of some unlucky chicken that had foolishly trusted itself within reach of the beak of a spiteful hen. Jacko was seated in the stern sheets, busily occupied in pulling to pieces the rim of an old straw hat, and a veteran old cock that had escaped from his prison in a hencoop, was quietly perched on one leg on the side of the long boat, nodding drowsily. This was the quiet state of affairs on the morning in question, when without the slightest warning, there burst upon the ship a terrific whirlwind. The Chinaman was the first to feel it. I saw him turn as pale as a ghost, and at that instant his hat went

flying merrily over the side. There was a noise such as never was heard even in Noah's ark—wind howling, sails flapping, spars cracking, blocks falling, men shouting, pigs squealing, fowls cackling, Jacko screaming—a confused uproar of sounds, and every body holding on tight to something or other, under the firm persuasion that that alone could save them. A minute and half a minute and it was all over—all three top-gallant masts sprung—flying jibboom in the water, jib in tatters—mainsail split—three topsails in same lamentable condition—cook under galley-fire—Chinaman stranded on a cable—the old cock overboard—and self under poop-awning, holding on to the *broom*, which, in the hurry of the moment, I had fondly imagined to be the strong brass railing of the poop. It was some few minutes before we knew exactly whether we were standing on our heads or our heels ; but when we did recover our senses, so ludicrous was the position in which each one found himself, and saw his neighbour, that it was impossible to resist a simultaneous roar of laughter. The damages were soon repaired, for spare spars and sails were not wanting on board the Victory ; and three days after this accident, we came to an anchor between Pulo Bardia and Champon in seven and a half fathoms clear water, with a fine clay bottom.

On the west side of Pulo Bardia, and just opposite to the town of Champon, is situated a large and thriving village, the inhabitants of which we found to be a civil, obliging, and industrious people. Their farm-yards were well stocked with pigs, poultry, goats, and even a few cows. We never wanted for fresh eggs, or milk, or butter during our stay. The men were better-looking than the general run of Malays, and some of the women and girls were really remarkably handsome, possessing not the slightest cast of a Malay profile, and with figures that were most unexceptionable ; but this, I imagine, arises from the natives of Champon having intermarried with Tenessarene men and women : many of the latter are descended from Indian castes, such as Gentoos, &c., and the Gentoos, though dark, have, with

very few exceptions, handsome and regular features and fine commanding figures. In Bardia, we found vegetables plentiful and cheap ; flowers grew wild and abundant, and I seldom saw a more beautiful collection of birds, butterflies, and moths than

PULO BARDIA.

those that we collected at Bardia. Champon is situated about seven miles up the river Tayung. We visited the town two or three times, and purchased of the natives a vast variety of skins, some of which were rare and handsome, especially those of the squirrel tribe. I imagine that the Tayung river might easily be rendered navigable for vessels of a moderate tonnage right up to Rindony on the West Coast ; and if this could be accomplished it would cut off a great circuit for vessels bound from China to Calcutta and Madras.

We remained a fortnight at Pulo Bardia, and then coasted along towards Tringano, passing Sancori and Carnom point, and, the wind proving fair, we went right through the Channel, between Ligor and the Island of Tantalem, in some parts rather dangerous navigation, owing to sunken rocks; but our scrany had often been through before in smaller craft, and he

CHAMPON.

undertook to pilot the vessel. The scenery on both sides was very grand. On the old Ligor coast the bold lofty range of mountains contrasted finely with the low rich fertile ground of Tantalem: then there was a fine creek or river off Talung; and about four in the evening we hove-to, off Sangora, which town, much to the terror of the inhabitants, we saluted with twenty-one guns. The roar of the cannon was echoed and re-echoed in every direction. No sooner had the last sound died away in the distance, than the old Rajah put off in his state barge and came alongside to inquire into the cause of the hubbub, and his alarm

was changed into great joy and gratification when Captain S. informed him that the salute was intended for himself (the Rajah). He pressed us very much to land, but the wind was too favourable to lose, so simply begging of him to forward our letters that we entrusted to his care, overland to Queda and

SANGORA.—STRAITS OF TANTALEM.

Penang, we braced up again to the breeze, and, rounding the Cape, opposite to Lan Sun, stood out for Pulo Lozin, so as to have a fair offing to chase us off Cape Patani. The Victory sailed like a witch on a wind, and we had a fine stiff breeze that night that made her dance again over the water. She completely ran away with us, and the morning watch immediately after being called gave the alarm, much to the captain's astonishment, of land on the larboard bow. According to his reckoning we should have sighted the island at daybreak, instead of which, when day broke, there was Pulo Lozin far away on our stern. Being perfectly satisfied on this point, the vessel was eased off gradually till the wind was right astern, and then, with studding

sails below and aloft, we stood directly for the passage between Pulo Santingo and the Great Redang. As the day grew the wind increased, until it settled into a perfect gale. One by one the

WORKING THROUGH PULO SANTINGO AND GREAT REDANG.

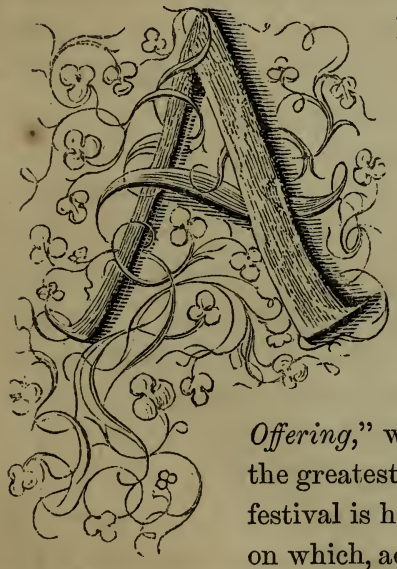
sails were taken in and reefed, till we were reduced to two close reefed topsails. The ship rolled mightily through the heavy tempestuous billows: at noon we sighted the Great Redang; at half-past three we entered the Channel, still rolling heavily; and at six in the evening we came to an anchor, under the lee of a small island off the coast of Tringano. Next morning the weather was calm, and we proceeded on to the town, a distance of about twenty-five miles from our anchorage. We arrived at noon, and much to my disappointment I found on landing that the Rajah had prepared the tithes, presents, &c., against our arrival, so that we had nothing to detain us but to get a few

provisions and some water on board. We had a ramble over the town; it was neatly enough constructed, and the environs abounded with beautiful fruit gardens. The natives, both men and women, were handsome and robust, and seemed very happy and contented. We dined at the Rajah's that evening, and visited the long store-house built for the warehousing of all export and import goods. It belongs to the Rajah, who is the sole merchant in that province, and who monopolises all the trade. There was a strange variety of commodities in this store-house, and amongst other things a surprising quantity of Chinese toys, which the Rajah informed us were the most saleable articles of the import trade. Old boys of four-score delighted in watching the movements of a little carriage that ran upon springs on being wound up like a watch. That night we sailed again on our return to Siam, and in due course anchored off the prince's palace at Bangkok.

TRINGANO.

CHAPTER VIII.

Festival of the Peace Offering.—Legend which has given rise to the festival.—Procession of the inhabitants to celebrate it.—Description of the ceremonies.—Peculiar mode of catching fish.—Description of a supper supplied by a Chinese.—Visit to the ruined city of Yuthia.—Return to Bangkok.



AFTER the exorbitant expenditure gone to by the Siamese government in the case related in a previous chapter, namely, as regards the support of the two Siamese white elephants, another proof of their possessing more riches than brains is clearly seen in the annual festival called the festival of the "*Peace Offering*," which is at Bangkok kept up with the greatest magnificence and splendour. This festival is held in commemoration of the day on which, according to Siamese tradition, silver and precious metals were first discovered to be contained in the mines in the interior of the Siamese dominions; and the story linked with this tradition has at least the merit of being purely oriental fairy legendary lore. As some of my fair readers may perhaps be desirous of hearing this romantic legend as it was related to me, so shall I describe it. But, alas! the emphasis and the gestures made use of by the original story-teller, cannot be imitated by my feeble pen.

THE LEGEND OF THE "KING'S DAUGHTER."

Many, many years ago, when the sun was much nearer the earth than it now is, and when their Celestial Majesties, the Kings or Emperors of China or Siam, were wont to hold daily intercourse with old Sol, their elder brother, and consult him in all cases of difficulty and danger, employing his numerous retinue the stars, and even in cases of emergency those more distinguished officers, the planets, as emissaries of peace or warfare, there dwelt at Yuthia, the then capital of the Siamese dominions, a very aged monarch, who, after having reigned with a peaceful sway over his subjects for a period of nearly two centuries, tired of the cares and troubles attendant upon the regal state, had abdicated the throne in favour of his only son, a mild youth, of not more than one hundred and sixty or seventy years old. Old age was, at that period, a thing almost unheard of in these favoured regions, before a thousand or fifteen hundred years had elapsed, such was the warmth, and strength, and life imparted by the close proximity of kind old Sol, who never thought of turning in of a night, lest perchance some evil might befall his cherished brethren and their subjects. This having been the very brilliant state of affairs, the services of the Stars were of course at a low valuation; and they, vexed to find their brilliancy thus totally eclipsed, formed the wicked resolution of revolting against their lawful sovereign and liege master; and, accordingly, instead of going to sleep during the twelve hours vulgarly termed day, they unanimously and secretly agreed to watch old Sol's movements, and only to make sham to sleep. "For," quoth they, "this used not to be our sovereign's wont of old; he loved his couch as much as we do ours, and there certainly must be some very strong attraction to draw him so close to this vile empire, Earth, quitting those loftier hemispheres where he breathed the fresh, untainted air of heaven."

Having closed this compact, the naughty little stars, in lieu of

going to sleep like good little constellations, only pretended to snooze, and kept blinking their bright little inquisitive eyes, first at one another, and then at their master the Sun, who, quite unconscious of the horrid snare laid to watch him, and imagining his retinue all asleep, grew brighter, and brighter, and brighter, as the hour approached mid-day, and a perpetual benign smile dwelt upon his jolly, big round face.

Now, it so happened, that the old monarch before alluded to, who dwelt in quiet and peaceable retirement, possessed one only daughter, whose name was, being interpreted, "*The Rosy Morn.*" Rosy Morn was as beautiful as her name, you may perceive, indicates; she was the only comfort and solace of her poor, aged father, and besides himself and her own family, none had ever set eyes upon her lovely face; beautiful and good, chaste and simple, her sole amusements and pastimes consisted in lulling her aged parent to rest by the music of her sweet voice, and while he slumbered, sauntering amongst unfrequented woods and dells, making the hills echo again to her merry notes, and culling the sweet wild flowers of the forest, to make wreaths with which she decorated her lovely brow. There was a purling brook that murmured gently by the mountain side, and in a cavern, shaded from the mid-day heat, "Rosy Morn" was wont each day to rest awhile, bathing her weary little feet in the cool crystal waters as she crossed. Here, in deep solitude, would she watch the gambols of the sportive squirrels, or, listening to the gentle murmuring of the zephyr as it rustled through the topmost boughs of the banian tree, fall into soft sleep, and dream of bright birds and flowers beyond conception sweet. But, alas for her peace of mind! and alas for her pure and guileless heart! it chanced one day that in her usual rambles, a gorgeous butterfly, more glorious than any she had heretofore seen, flew past her path and lighted on a neighbouring flower. In sportive chase of that deceptive moth, she sped from flower to flower, from myrtle bush to wild jessamine bower. 'Twas vain! The moth at length took lofty flight, and flitting high up in the air, she strove to

watch it still, till Sol's bright chariot coming over the shady hill, dazzled her eyes so much, that she was forced to relinquish all hopes of capturing the errant moth, and so, disconsolate, and with her small feet aching, she retraced her steps, and sought her loved retreat, there, in the sleep of innocence, to forget her woe. Arriving at the favourite brook, she stooped to quench her thirst from its refreshing waters; and the day was so hot, and she so much fatigued, that the idea occurred to "Rosy Morn" of bathing in that limpid stream. Now she floated merrily down with the ripples, now struggled against their tiny efforts; and, finally, very much refreshed and delighted with the experiment, and vowing to repeat it again on the morrow, she sought refuge in the cavern (having, *of course, re-dressed herself*) and there fell fast asleep.

Now, it so happened, that whilst all this was occurring, old Sol, who was wide awake, and on the look-out from his chariot at the very identical moment that "Rosy Morn" was gazing up after the butterfly, caught a glimpse of her incomparably charming face, and, as is often the case even now-a-days, fell desperately in love at first sight, and instantly changing the course of his chariot, drove at a furious rate down towards the earth. So skilfully managed were the reins, and so fleet the coursers, that they arrived just in time to permit of Sol's enjoying a prospect of "Rosy Morn's" gambols in the water. If at a distance he had been struck with her charms, on a nearer view he nearly went frantic with love; and, no sooner had "Rosy Morn" retired to her couch in the cavern, than, like an impudent fellow, he must follow too. Sol, it would appear, was an accomplished lover; he claimed connection with "Rosy Morn's" father, and her uncle and the whole of the family connections; and, in short, conducted himself in so ingenious and fascinating a way, that he gained complete possession of poor Rosy's heart, and they there and then exchanged vows of eternal fidelity. The courtship was of rather long duration, somewhere about two thousand years. But what is that to the gods? Sol kept everybody alive with

his warm good-nature and perpetual mirth; and regularly, at the hour of noon, he and "Rosy Morn" met at the appointed rendezvous.

Matters were in this state when the stars got an inkling of the real state of affairs, and, as I said before, kept watch over the knight errant's proceeding. Just as the hour of noon approached, they saw "Rosy Morn" approach, and they saw her meeting with Old Sol, and watched them both go into the cavern together, and then, while the unsuspicious lovers were fondly conversing, the stars drove off the chariot that had carried Old Sol, and the horses, taking fright, set off at full speed, and ran home again. Having thus cut off all retreat, the stars raised a simultaneous shout, proclaiming the sin their sovereign was convicted of; disclaiming him as their lawful master, and declaring a republic amongst themselves. Poor Old Sol trembling and convicted, shed tears of pure gold, and the mountains taking pity upon him opened a cavern, by which he might reach his home in safety, and told him that he might drive through there every day for safety's sake. Sol shed abundant tears of gold and wept at intervals as he went along; these spots where he wept are now the gold mines of Siam. It took Sol twelve hours to regain his home, and then he drove out as usual, passing through this cavern on his way home every night; and they say that, for a fortnight in every month, he picks up his bride, "Rosy Morn," at the mouth of the cavern, and takes her home with him. As for "Rosy Morn," she wandered disconsolate through many caverns and mountains also, and her tears, flowing abundantly, were all tears of silver: these spots are now the silver mines of Siam. At length a compact was closed between the republican stars and Old Sol, to the end that, for one-half of the month, they should be allowed to gaze upon her lovely face, and that she was to live with Old Sol the other half; but it was distinctly stipulated that Old Sol should never dare to kiss "Rosy Morn," or, as she is now called the Moon, before public gaze. This stipulation is, however, occasionally broken when an eclipse

solar or lunar takes place; and then, on such occasion, the Siamese turn out *en masse*, and shout and fire guns, and beat gongs to warn both parties of the impropriety of such proceedings, and the warning generally has its due effect in the course of two or three hours—such time being requisite to elapse before the warning sound could travel such a great distance from earth.

Such, gentle reader, is the fable of the festival of the peace-offering, and the spot where it is celebrated is, by the Siamese, believed to be the very identical cave where "Rosy Morn" and Old Sol were wont to plight their faith, and vow vows of eternal love.

To this cavern an annual pilgrimage is made by all the male inhabitants of Bangkok and the surrounding villages—each man carrying with him, according to his means and position in life, an offering in the shape of pieces of money, in gold and silver, which votive offering is, after a form of prayer repeated by the attendant priests, cast into an impenetrable pit at the further end of the cavern. The procession usually starts from Bangkok by water, and landing at Yuthia, or Juthia, the ancient capital, proceeds on foot through a well-beaten pathway to the much-revered spot, which is not many miles distant from the place of debarkation.

We accompanied this procession in the year 1840, having been permitted to do so under the kind auspices and patronage of Mr. H——, who possessed sufficient influence at court to procure us this privilege—a boon seldom accorded to any professing a creed differing from that of the Siamese themselves. At daybreak on the appointed day, canoes were seen gliding rapidly from every part of the river towards the mosque of the White Elephant. H——, myself, and two or three others, masters of different vessels, had been astir since four o'clock, nearly an hour and a half before the first tint of dawn made its appearance in the rosy east. We made good use of our leisure time in disposing of a goodly quantity of viands and other substantials for breakfast, knowing full well that as

His Majesty himself was to head the procession, we should be denied anything in the shape of a breakfast before that mighty potentate had satiated his appetite, an event not likely to occur before midday at the earliest, and one which would have considerably damped our having any pleasurable participation in the novelties of the scene we were about to witness. We had just finished smoking our first cigar as the dawn appeared, and the spectacle of many canoes presented itself. "Come along!" cried old H——; "we must be off early, or else the river will be completely blockaded." Willingly obeying this summons, we were marshalled down to the water-side, and there found one of the Prince's state-canoes ready in attendance for us. It was at all times a handsome boat, but on this particular occasion was very beautifully and tastefully arranged; garlands of flowers were hanging in festoons all round her sides, the men that paddled were very smartly dressed, and the cushions on which we sat were composed of crimson velvet, inwrought with gold tissue flowers. She had twenty paddles, besides the one used by the steersman, and with all these at work (the tide serving at the time) the canoe shot through the water like a meteor. We were soon at the point of rendezvous, and had scarce been there five minutes before a universal crouching of the multitude assembled in the endless canoes, the sounding of gongs and blowing of trumpets proclaimed the approach of no less a personage than His Majesty the king himself. Though obliged to bow down my head like the herd in general, I caught a glimpse of His Majesty through my fingers, as the fat old fellow came rolling down, supported on either side by cringing courtiers, puffing and blowing like a grampus. The exertion was evidently a great one for him, and one to which he was but little accustomed; as, though the distance was not many hundred yards, he was compelled more than once to call a halt. At last the fat king was seated, and the procession formed in regular order; the canoes of the ministers of state following next to the royal family, and the others following in like order, according to

the rank of their different proprietors. Mr. H—— being a peer of the realm, we were stationed somewhere about the third range of canoes from the royal family, the average number of canoes in a line being from five to eight. I was surprised to see such beautiful regularity and discipline as was kept up in the lines of march, especially as the current was sweeping us rapidly towards the points in the many different turnings of the river. When morning fairly broke, my delight was indeed great to witness so magnificent a spectacle. Upwards of seventy thousand canoes, all more or less brilliantly painted, with gay streamers of every colour in the rainbow, floating from little tiny masts stuck up in the prow and in the stern; people dressed in a great variety of coloured stuffs, and the soft bands of Siamese music floating gently o'er the water. The voice of melody was perfection itself, though no distinct chords or airs could be traced. They had more the effect of several Æolian harps, sighing to the morning zephyr. The instruments used in these bands were a species of pandean pipes; they consisted o several hollow reeds passed through a hollow block of wood hermetically sealed on all sides, save the orifice left to blow into. A little hole in each reed, some four or five inches above the mouth-piece, served as notes, and the performer played with both hands, keeping all the keys closed except the note he wished to sound, which note had a responding chord on the opposite side. The intonation is really beautiful, and I have little doubt that under skilful hands, this instrument could be brought to perfection.

Though no one was expected, or rather dared, to break his fast before the permission of the king had been obtained to this effect, we took the liberty of smoking cigars *en route*, as did every single soul in this armament of boats, His Majesty, I believe, excepted. Talk about the Turks being great smokers! why the Siamese beat them all to nothing. I have often seen a child only just able to toddle about, and certainly not more than two years of age, quit its mother's breast to go and get a whiff

from papa's cigaret, or, as they are here termed, *borees*—cigarets made of the dried leaf of the plantain-tree, inside of which the tobacco is rolled up.

So we smoked and puffed, and the men puffed and paddled; and as we advanced, fresh landscapes were always inviting our attention: one moment it was a rich sugar-cane plantation which H—— envied, and wished he possessed, to convert into sugar; the next, it was a thickset mango tope, amongst whose branches *I* longed to be, envying the squirrels the felonies they were committing amongst the ripe and luscious fruit; a third, and we came upon a paddy-field, or rice-plantation, and then it was the Siamese boatmen's turn to be envious, and to turn up their eyes despairingly, as they knew that the hour for boiled rice and stewed fish was, alas! not arrived by a long way, and their bowels yearned towards this field and its productions. At length, after three hours' incessant paddling, the tide having favoured us all the way, we sighted the ruins of the city of Yuthia. The first thing that turned out to greet us was a crocodile, and a few minutes afterwards another, perhaps his mate; then we met a whole host of crows and a vulture; lastly, we arrived at the city itself, and having landed, found it to consist of—six fishermen's huts and a betel-nut vendor's stall! And yet, not more than twenty-five years before the date of my visit, it had been more densely populated than Bangkok. The twenty or twenty-five miserable inhabitants were all prostrate before their little city, waiting till the whole cortège should pass before they joined in the procession, as the inhabitants of Bangkok are the cockneys of Siam, and claim precedence wherever they go. A magnificent litter had been prepared for the king, and seated in this, he was carried on the shoulders of eight of his most faithful subjects. The bearers were being relieved continually; whether from the ardent desire of all to share in the honour of carrying so illustrious an individual, or from other motives, I am unable to say; I rather think, though, that they found their burthen so excessively heavy, that they

were compelled to call in assistance after a very short trial. A band of pestiferous-looking priests, clad in plague-signal cloth, led the van, the chief of whom carried the Siamese national banner, to wit, a red flag with a white elephant in the centre. The first mile of ground led through paddy-fields abounding with crows and vultures, things so common in Siam as to render our march most unexciting, the only excitement entertained being that of alarm and fear lest, in the thick grass and weeds through which we were passing, we should inadvertently set foot upon a snake—a by no means agreeable species of sensation, when you are labouring under the conviction of having come out in pumps and stockings for the occasion, and that the fangs of a viper would easily penetrate far more resistible articles. Our only consolation was, that the priests and those in advance of us were going over exactly the same ground as ourselves, and were therefore more liable to fall in the combat. I admit this was not a very charitable thought, but it is linked with human nature, and must be excusable. As results proved, however, we got through this place scot free; nor snake nor serpent turned up to oppose our path, or at least if they did they must have had an effectual quietus in the heels of the shoes of the many-headed. Emerging from this paddy-field, we entered upon a sloping ground, which led us into the very heart of a thickly-set *toddy tope*, or plantation of cocoa-nut trees. High up, and seated amongst the lofty branches of these, were a legion of monkeys, all chattering and grinning and pouting at each other in a most ludicrous and inquisitive manner; they were evidently anxious to ascertain what the whole of these proceedings meant, and why there should be such a sudden irruption of people upon their heretofore little-frequented territory. Knowing the vicious propensities of these creatures, I was chuckling to myself in the diabolical expectation that one of them might be induced to drop a friendly cocoa-nut upon the bald pate of his Celestial Majesty; but they were evidently Siamese monkeys to the backbone, and dared not insult their imperial master.

Possibly they thought that in reward for such an action, he might cause their favourite haunts and trees to be cut down or burnt up with fire. Through this place we also passed unscathed, and then we entered into a regular jungle, a place meet for tigers and chetahs, with grass growing taller than any man, and boughs of trees so impenetrably knit together, that ages and ages must have passed since the sun ever shone on that dark decomposed earth.

The jungle was not, however, very broad in this part, and after about twenty minutes walking we came out into the morning sunlight again, delighted once more to inhale the fresh pure air of heaven. There stood before us the miraculous hill, or rather I should call it, mound, for it was little better than one of those tumuli so often met with in Syria. In the centre there was a cavern, and close by it flowed a little brook, so shallow that you could hardly sink a mouse in it. Thought I to myself, things must have sadly degenerated since the days of the famed Siamese Legion, in every respect ; for not only are the lives of men sadly curtailed, but mountains have become almost ant-hills, and brooks that floated young ladies, turned into streamlets that any strong-minded ant could swim across at a start. Such, however, was the case, and now the ceremony of the peace-offering commenced. First the king actually condescended to bathe his own feet in a little stream of water, and then he reverently approached the cavern, and, crouching as he entered, he went up to the further end, and through a large orifice in the earth, somewhat resembling a well, and about four feet in diameter (as I afterwards ascertained), let drop his piece of gold, and then, backing out in the same way as he had entered, remounted his litter, and was forthwith conveyed to a spot some two hundred yards off, where his liege subjects had prepared his royal breakfast. The moment the king was seated on the cushions and carpets spread out, some attendant imps entirely concealed him from view with a curiously wrought circular screen, and so there was an end to my hopes of getting a sight

of this grampus at meals. The concourse now thronged by dozens to the votive shrine; but though we arrived there by eleven o'clock in the morning the throng never ceased pressing towards the caravan till sunset, and then not one-third the number had accomplished their vows. Thus it would occupy three good days ere the ceremony could be completed, the interval being employed by the natives in eating and sleeping throughout the day (except such as were actively engaged in the ceremony), and keeping watch throughout the night against the encroachment of reptiles and wild beasts, by keeping large bonfires continually lit, which served also in some measure to check the mosquitoes in the murderous nightly onslaught they made, with a perfect whirlwind of buzzing. The old king absolutely remained throughout the whole time, but then his comforts had been amply provided, and with the exception perhaps of the absence of a few of his favourite Dulcineas, slept *à la campagne* as well as he did in his massive palace.

Now I and the others that accompanied Mr. H—— had by no means bargained for such a treat as this; sleep was to our eyes precious, and breakfasts, dinners, and suppers goodly, so we were sadly amazed and puzzled to find ourselves in this dilemma. Old Mr. H——, however, after having had his joke out with us, gave us to understand, to our rapturous delight, that he had taken due precaution to provide against all apparent evils, telling us that if we would have the goodness to follow him along the banks of the little rivulet, twenty minutes' walk would bring us to a village where the necessary preparations had been made many days previous. Our spirits were amazingly revived at this intelligence, and hopping off the ground upon which we were seated tailor fashion, we walked briskly onwards, quickening our paces as darkness now gathered in around us, lest a stray tiger should take it into his head to place an obstacle in our onward way. With the exception of one alarm, and that was from a poor cow that was browsing quietly in a little yam field, and which a Portuguese captain of our company, in his excessive

anxiety and fear, magnified into an elephant, we encountered no let or hindrance, and soon after nightfall reached the village where the welcome tone of the well-known voice of one of Mr. A——'s servants, assured us that all was sunny and comfortable, and the result proved his words to be truth itself.

The village at which we had slept consisted of upwards of thirty houses or sams, built after the Malayan custom, that is to say, they were raised high up in the air to prevent the intrusion of reptiles or beasts of prey, and were accessible only by means of a ladder, which ladder was hauled up and stowed in one side of the cabin so soon as the family were about to retire for the night. In the immediate space between the cabin and the ground, rough bamboos were lashed cross-ways from the poles that supported the house, and at a height from the ground that would preclude the possibility of any jackal or other wild animal committing depredations amongst the poultry, and these served for the fowls to roost upon during the night. The pigs, ducks, &c., were well secured in separate buildings, and though marauders from the jungle made nightly efforts to force an entrance into these places, they were so well and strongly secured that they never succeeded. Each house had a considerable portion of ground attached to it, which was principally cultivated with yams and the sweet potato, beans and radishes being occasionally interspersed; the banana or plantain tree here grew very luxuriantly, and ever and anon a lofty palm or cocoa-nut tree would rear itself proudly above its dwarfish neighbours. A little tributary stream of the Menam ran right through the centre of the village, and in the monsoons, when the fall of rain was often excessively heavy, the natives informed us that this stream assumed the strength and form of a perfect torrent, often flooding the surrounding country for many hundred yards on either bank. This also was another motive for inducing them to build their houses on the top of platforms supported by lofty poles. During the two nights that we slept at this village there was scarcely a male inhabitant

present, all being absent at the sacred cavern ; the ladies, however, were very obliging and communicative, and gave us a great deal of information intermixed with tales of a marvellous and dubious character. Small fish were very abundant in this little tributary stream, and we had no small sport in endeavouring to secure some of them for our luncheon on our way back to the scene of the festival the next day. The heat was excessive, although only nine o'clock a.m., and walking did anything but improve this state of affairs. The cool rippling of the water looked so inviting that we could not resist the temptation of bathing, the water was unfortunately very shallow, yet by remaining in a sitting posture we secured our shoulders from being blistered by the sun, whose hot rays, however, struck fiercely on our heads ; to remedy this evil we had recourse to our large silk pocket-handkerchiefs which we saturated with water, and then tied round our heads, keeping them damp by occasionally dipping our heads under water. This completely secured us from all fears of a *coup de soleil,* and the enjoyment of those few hours spent in that stream will not easily be forgotten by those that remain of the party. The water was as clear as a mirror, and the fine sand at the bottom finer than the finest Brussels carpet ; shoals of tiny little fish were darting about in every direction, and ludicrous were the attempts made by us to catch them with our hands, the chase generally terminating in a somersault in the water. One of Mr. H.'s Siamese servants, a very 'cute lad, and skilful in the art of fishing in particular, suggested to us a plan, which we immediately adopted, and which proved successful even beyond our most sanguine expectations : by means of a mometty or hatchet, which he ran and borrowed from a husbandman who was tilling a piece of ground not many hundred yards off, this fellow dug in a very few minutes a reservoir about two feet distant from the banks of the stream, and about eighteen inches deeper than the deepest part of the stream itself. Having completed this he lopped a goodly-sized bamboo from off one of the many bamboo bushes

that were growing nigh at hand; cutting off the joints of this he obtained a hollow piece, which formed a pipe of nearly a yard in length; and now commenced the real labour of his work, and the hatchet was brought into play again; with this he dug away at the bottom of the reservoir so as to reduce the distance between it and the river. Meanwhile, another, inside of the water, was scratching away in the sand, like a terrier at a rat-hole, inserting his knees into the vacuum he made so as to prevent its being immediately filled up again with sand; in this way they worked hard for nearly twenty minutes; the bamboo tube, which was of immense thickness and strength, was then by means of a pocket-knife sharpened so well that it would have been a dangerous weapon to strike a man with, this was then with might and main passed through the earth, from the soft clayey side of the reservoir, and in a few minutes a loud shout proclaimed that victory had crowned their efforts; the bamboo tube had penetrated into the stream, and the water for a moment deviating from its course filled the reservoir with water. So far so good; we were as yet in ignorance as to what was to follow, obeying, however, the injunctions of our Siamese leader, we all came out of the water, and having separated into two parties, one marched left and the other right along the tributary stream; when either party had got to about a hundred yards from the reservoir or fish-trap, we were commanded to halt and enter the water again, and then in open columns to approach each other splashing the water with our hands, and creating as great a hullaballoo as we could. This injunction was duly performed, to the great alarm and astonishment of the shoals of little fish that fled from us as we were approaching on either side towards the centre, and there finding, as they fondly imagined, an outlet, they bolted through the bamboo pipe right into the reservoir, and then H.'s servant who had been watching on the opposite bank, when he thought a sufficient quantity had been entrapped, made a sudden rush into the water, and with one mighty effort pulled the bamboo tube through, and thus cut off all intercourse between

the river and the reservoir. Oh! but it was rare fun to see the swarms of little fish that were snugly entrapped in that little reservoir. We began getting them out of the water by means of a tin-pot, but finding this operation too tedious we resorted to the far quicker expedient of baling out the water itself; for this purpose basket, tin-pot, and even our straw hats were put into requisition, and in a very short space of time the water was all gone, and there lay a little shoal of fish which filled a very goodly-sized basket, and which, in about an hour's time afterwards were served up in one of the most delicious curries I ever remember to have tasted. The best of it was their bones were so delicate that we could swallow them entire, head, tail, bones, and everything. After getting pretty well splashed with mud in the operation of baling out, we took to the water again for a few minutes, and then came out fresh and strong, like giants ready to run their course.

The second and third days at the scene of the feast passed off very much the same as the first, we only varying our occupations by shooting parrots or pigeons, or fishing upon the trap system, which, I may here remark, never upon a single occasion failed. On the fourth day, however, the procession closed ranks and turned their faces towards Bangkok again, with the same state and ceremony as when they arrived. Our party lingered behind awhile, so as to get a peep at the cavern. No sooner were the pilgrims out of sight than our unhallowed feet were treading upon the earth of the sacred cavern, and our sinful eyes gazing down that dark mysterious pit, in which so many millions of precious coins must, through a course of centuries, have been poured: we dropped stones, and one of our party even dropped a piece of money, but we listened and listened in vain for any sound that might announce its arrival at the bottom; nothing but a low murmuring sound as the wind swept into the cavern and rushed through this opening into its dark mysterious chambers below. "Ah!" thought I to myself, "if ever I should live to see John Bull get possession of this fair wealthy land, I

know where to find my bankers. Whilst others may love in the river to fish, I'll come here with a deep-sea lead covered with cobbler's wax, and some seventy or eighty fathoms of line, and if I don't hook up something better than fish, I'm a Dutchman." Having completed our survey we took to our heels, and ran a race so as to overtake, if possible, the rear-guard of the pilgrims before arriving at the worst part of the jungle, for we relished not the idea of being left alone amongst such very undesirable neighbours as that jungle afforded. Notwithstanding all our speed, however, we missed them, nor did we ever see them again till hot and fatigued, out of breath, and exhausted from the good speed we had made, we reached Yuthia just in time to see the last few hundred canoes sweeping round the corner of the first turning in the river. Most strange to say, not a single monkey was to be seen amongst the cocoa-nut trees on our return, they had evidently been alarmed by the invasion of so large an army, and had sought refuge in some more remote part of the jungle.

I have already stated that the *city* of Yuthia, at the period of our visit, consisted of some six fishermen's huts and a betel-nut vendor's stall: on our return from the money-devouring cave, we agreed to devote one day, at least, to researches amongst its ruins. The only difficulty however was, how or where we were to pass the night. After a good deal of discussion about this knotty point, it was finally arranged that we should sleep in the canoes moored to the bank, Mr. H—— retaining the state-canoe for himself, and myself and the others using those belonging to the natives. A cushion, however, from the state-canoe was allotted to each to rest our heads upon, and the bottom planks of the canoe formed our mattresses; though by no means soft, they at least possessed the advantage of being cool beds—a very essential requisite of a sultry night in these hot climes. Matters being thus satisfactorily arranged, we bethought us of supper; for the exercise of the day had given us a keen appetite. One of the fishermen, a Chinaman by birth, undertook, for the consideration of five ticols in silver, to give us a spread, and we watched

his cooking operations with the eye of a falcon and the cravings of a wolf. He was evidently well versed in the culinary art, and in little more than an hour's time set before us the result of his labours. The first dish was a species of soup, called by the natives *chou chou:* it was a composition of pork, fowl, yams, sweet potatoes, ducks, fish, onions, garlic, mint, pepper, salt, and cloves ; these were all boiled down to a perfect mash, and then more water and a small piece of bird's-nest were added, till the whole somewhat resembled in substance and colour, very rich turtle-soup. This singular mixture, which perhaps, under any other circumstances, I should have been very loth to taste, was, upon trial, highly approved of by all our party ; and having once eaten it, I should be glad to have such another mess again any day in the week. After this soup, we had some plain boiled rice, with mango pickles and *balichung.* This latter article I thought really quite delicious, little imagining at the time what it was composed of, or how made. Gentle reader, imagine my horror on learning, some few days after, that *balichung* was nothing more or less than putrified prawns, which are in this state dried in an oven, and then beat up in a mortar with onions, garlic, spices, and a little salt ; this is then placed in a jar, and hot vinegar poured over it ; being then left a sufficient time to allow the vinegar to penetrate and thoroughly saturate the fish, the jar is hermetically closed, and set aside for sometimes a couple of months, or even a longer period. The last dish consisted of some roast ducks, done to a nicety. Having done ample justice to this supper, we betook ourselves to our canoe-bedsteads ; and neither heat, nor mosquitoes, nor dew, interrupted our slumbers through that long night.

The first dawn of day was the signal for all of us to quit our floating couches. It was very fine and pleasant, and vastly agreeable and refreshing, so long as we were asleep ; but, oh ! what excruciating pain I experienced in every limb on attempting to rise ! a kind of sensation as though some one had been giving me a sound cudgelling over night, and had broken every

bone in my body. I limped out of the boat as well as I could, having nearly tumbled into the river in the attempt. The others were as bad as myself, with the exception of old H——, who was too old a stager at this kind of work to suffer any inconvenience therefrom. A few minutes' brisk walking about the banks made the blood circulate again ; and by the time we had partaken of some of the old Chinaman's tea, we were all as well and sprightly as ever.

There is a vile practice, in Turkey, of offering a guest small cups of very bitter coffee, without sugar or milk, a refusal to swallow which, would be a gross insult to the host, though the abomination tastes like a mixture of quassia and quinine. The Chinese have a still more inhuman system of forcing dreadfully strong green tea upon their victimised guests, equally void of sugar or milk ; a succession of which cups of tea, if continued for the space of a week, would reduce the strongest-nerved man in Europe into a state of nervous debility, and cause him to start at the squeal of a mouse, as a lady would at the report of a cannon. We should have fallen victims to this species of barbarity on the present occasion, had not H.'s servant had the forethought to provide against such an emergency, by bringing a tin canister with him full of sugar-candy.

Now, then, to explore the ruins of the ruined city of Yuthia. First we come to two stones, one above another, and a small piece of burnt timber, evidently the remains of some house that had caught fire. A few more paces, and we find half a ruined wall, and a lizard (the latter bolted on our near approach) ; more walls, more stones, more lizards, and then we tumbled across a snake ! M—— made short work of him with his gun. The report was the signal for a universal rustling and squealing among the bushes near us. Quadrupeds and bipeds and insects emerged from their retreat, and sought refuge in every direction. A jackal and a cat were the next victims to our guns. All this time we marked evident traces of the foundations of houses that had once existed; and the stumps of poles

driven fast into the ground led us to understand that these had been the habitations of the poorer class, who, like those we had seen at the village we slept at, had had houses exalted upon lofty poles. Captain S—— picked up the leg of a little statue, beautifully sculptured in marble; but with this exception, nothing worthy of note was found. We saw plenty of bones, both of animals and human beings; and as we approached a rather suspicious-looking copse, round which tall grass grew in wild luxuriance, we discovered the imprint of a rather suspiciously-formed foot, which looked amazingly like a tiger's. After examining this with due care, we came to the wise resolution of retracing our steps towards the fishing huts. "Where's Mr. C—— ?" asked Mr. H——, as he missed him from our side all of a sudden. (C—— was the captain of a Bombay ship, loading sugar at Bangkok.) We looked around in vain for the missing man, till H.'s servant descried him in the distance, tearing over the ground at his utmost speed on his way home. The fact was, he had caught the ominous word *tiger*, and being of a nervous temperament, had thought prudence the better part of valour, and accordingly sought refuge in flight. Many and many a hearty laugh H—— and I had together, in after days, as we conjured up to memory's vision the truly ludicrous figure the Portuguese skipper cut, as he fled from the supposed vicinity of danger, leaving behind him, in his great hurry to be safe, his gun, powder-horn, and shot-belt. We reached the old Chinaman's hut in safety, and there put his services in requisition again for a ten o'clock breakfast.

The water of the Menam off Yuthia and its vicinity, is a great deal shallower than it is at Bangkok, and only vessels of a small tonnage could ever have been able to reach this capital. Probably this disadvantage, in conjunction with the insalubrity of the spot—owing to the very marshy ground which lies on the eastern bank—and the construction of large Siamese government vessels, was mainly contributable to the desertion of Yuthia, and the formation of the modern capital of Bangkok.

Further up the river, however, where only small junks can lie, the land is very highly cultivated, and some of the richest sugar-plantations in the whole kingdom of Siam are there to be found.

Towards mid-day we saw several small alligators crawl cautiously out of the water, and lie basking in the sun on the muddy banks of the river. One small fellow, hardly three feet in length, evidently a greenhorn, came out on the bank just under the hut where we were sitting, and in the course of a few minutes became so motionless that he was evidently having a nap. H.'s servant, who was a daring fellow and could swim like a fish, stole stealthily along the bank, and, suddenly seizing its tail, with his main strength endeavoured to haul the creature up on dry land. But Jack was as good as his master, and better; such surprising strength had the little brute, that with a sudden violent lash of its tail, it sent the man spinning several yards, and floored him regularly in the mud. I never saw anything more neatly done: in one instant, the alligator was fast asleep, and the Siamese making a gripe at its tail; the next, the alligator had disappeared in the water, and the Siamese was on the flat of his back in the mud. Lucky it was for the servant that he had fallen on mud, and not amongst stones or shingles; for such was the force with which he had been thrown, that on extricating himself, with the assistance of one of the boatmen, from his ignoble position, he had literally left a deep impression of his head and shoulders in the clay. They were obliged to draw water from the river in chatties (earthen water jugs) for the purpose of washing him clean again; and a precious operation they had to get all the mud out of his hair, for, as ill-luck would have it, he chanced to be a Burmese, and wore long hair like a woman. No one ever thinks of venturing into the water in this part of the river, so infested is it with alligators. The desolation of the spot, and the very few boats that now navigate the river, have caused these brutes to accumulate; for I have been told that there was never

one seen in the flourishing days of Yuthia—an assertion I can readily believe, from the fact of the Siamese being as much in the water as upon dry land; and such an amphibious people could never exist without being permitted to bathe at least twice a day; a thing they could not possibly do in a water teeming with alligators.

Soon after noon, the tide began to serve in our favour; so, getting into the canoe once again, after a sojourn of nearly five days amidst the ruins and jungles, the prairies and marshes, the toops and quagmires of this least picturesque portion of the river Menam, we bid adieu to Yuthia and the old Chinese cook, and so paddling merrily homeward, reached Bangkok just in time to wash and dress, and partake of one of Mr. Hunter's comfortable family dinners.

CHINESE COOK ON THE MENAM.

CHAPTER IX.

eneral character of the Siamese.—General inoffensiveness of their disposition.—Their dress.—Their passion for gambling.—Smoking opium.—Description of its effects.—Their skill as swimmers.—Adventure of an American who could not swim.—Want of beauty in ladies of Siam.—Use of betel-nut.—Ceremonies at birth of a child.—Amusements of ladies in the higher ranks.—Siamese women excellent housewives.—Education of children.—Selling of daughters.—General summary of Siamese character.

HERE is, perhaps, no other nation on the face of the earth which can be said to resemble, in their *tout ensemble*, the Siamese. The Malays have lent them their high cheek bones and flat sprawling noses; the Chinese their eyes; the Burmese their stature; and their complexions and dispositions have a *mélange* of all these nations put together. Of dwarfish stature, though of herculean strength, the Siamese yet possesses the meekness of a lamb, and a great deal of its cowardice. Though his features are cast in the Malayan mould, he possesses not one item of that insatiable thirst for revenge which is so prevalent a feature in the character of the latter people, and to gratify which they will sacrifice twenty unoffending victims, if by so doing they hope to convey one pang of bitter remorse to the soul of the object of their hatred. Who does not know what that fearful

sentence "*running a muck*" means, when the Malay, in the blind frenzy of his wrath rushes through streets, *kreese* in hand, maiming and destroying every harmless individual that may cross his path in his fiendish pursuit of revenge. Now, the Siamese are a people incapable of retaining one spark of animosity; and, during my stay at Bangkok, I do not remember a single instance of seeing two Siamese come to blows, and seldom even quarrel. They have been taught from their infancy to obey and respect every grade, from the king to those just one degree above them; and, from their inferiors, they in their turn receive that homage they pay to others; hence, even were they so disposed, opportunities seldom offer which would admit of a dispute. If they be men of the lower order, such as servants, &c., those whom they might consider their equals, from the fact of their being of the same calling, never have sufficient liberty at their command, or time on their hands, to admit of their meeting together and conversing; and as there are no public houses, those dens where brawls generally originate, if per hazard they are left together for a minute or two, they are too happy to embrace the opportunity of having a little friendly chat, and have no time to differ on any one single point. Their superiors they dare not insult, under penalty of the bastinado, that ogre that hangs *in terrorem* over the heads of all people in Asia; and, upon the same principle, or rather from the same motives, their inferiors dare not insult them.

The dress of the Siamese men of all classes varies only in costliness. The rich men wear skirts of silk and embroidered stuff, which reaches from the waist to the knees, the rest of the body being *de naturalibus*. The poor men are clothed in coarse cloth, sometimes dyed, but oftener in its original state. All carry a light muslin shawl, which is flung carelessly over the shoulders, while the end is fastened round the waist. The more opulent men amongst the Siamese spend their days seated cross-legged in the verandah of their little shops. They smoke and drink tea almost incessantly, only varying their occupation by

eating when meal hours arrive. They seem to have constitutionally the appetite of a wolf; for no man but a Siamese or a Chinaman in Siam, could for a continuance of years smoke and

MAN AND WOMAN OF SIAM.

drink tea as they do, take no exercise at all, and yet be always ready for their meals. That practice, so prevalent in the East, of asking just treble the value for the goods they dispose of, is familiar to the Siamese merchants and shopkeepers; but they do

not possess that sharp cunning and jesuitical sophistry which is so strongly delineated in both Jew and Gentile traffickers in the East. The more opulent among the Siamese merchants and the nobles and independent men of Bangkok, are strongly addicted to gambling and smoking opium ; but, as both these vices are prohibited by the king, and are amenable to a very heavy penalty (the third conviction subjecting the culprit to transportation for life), none dare indulge in them openly, or by daylight, but so inefficient is the Siamese police, that Bangkok is replete with gambling houses of all descriptions, and here nightly are to be met numbers of the richest and most respected inhabitants, the officers of state and noblemen included, staking immense sums of money upon the turn-up of a single card. After a dozen rounds have been played, the cards are put aside for a few minutes, and opium pipes introduced. These pipes resemble in form the common narghili, or hubblebubble, of the Levant. They consist of an empty cocoa-nut shell, in an orifice on the top of which a hollow wooden tube is inserted, and the opening hermetically closed, so as to prevent the escape of either air or smoke. In another hole in the side of the cocoa-nut shell, a common little bamboo tube, about eighteen inches long, is tightly fixed ; a little earthen bowl, perforated at the bottom like a sieve, is filled with opium, and one or two pieces of fire being placed thereon, this bowl is placed on the top of the wooden tube. The man who hands round this pipe holds with one hand the bottom of the cocoa-nut (which is half full of water), and with the other hand he presents the bamboo tube to the smoker, who, putting it to his mouth, inhales three or four whiffs of this most intoxicating and deleterious narcotic. The effect is almost instantaneous. He sinks gently against the cushion set at his back, and becomes perfectly insensible to what is passing around. From this state of torpor, after the lapse of a few minutes, he as gradually begins to recover, and in about five minutes time he is ready and fit to resume the game again. The pipe is passed round from mouth to mouth, so that half an hour generally

INTERIOR OF AN OPIUM-HOUSE IN SIAM.

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intervenes between the first whiff taken by the first smoker, and the last sigh heaved by the last man, as he indicates his revival from that Elysium of bliss, that short, pleasant dream, from which he is gradually awaking. One old, inveterate opium smoker told me, that if he knew his life would be forfeited by the act, he could no more resist the temptation than he could curb a fiery steed with a thread bridle. It carried him into the seventh heaven; he heard and saw things no tongue could utter, and felt as though his soul soared so high above things earthly, during those precious moments of oblivion, as to have flown beyond the reach of its heavy, burthensome cage. However true all this may have been, however ecstatic the enjoyment,—the tremulous voice and palsied frame,—the deep-sunken, glassy, unmeaning eyes, spoke volumes as to the direful effects of the system upon the frame; and, however much soul, or however buoyant spirits may have lighted up the tabernacle while under such excitement, there was evidently but a faint spark of vitality left within. At other times, and a few more whiffs, a few more pleasant, glorious dreams, and that last spark would be extinct, and nought but darkness dwell within that lifeless trunk, which had revelled its glorious light away.

"Where has the brightness fled
That lighted up your eye?
Where have both thought and spirit fled,
The smile, the tear, the sigh?
The rippling waters answer 'hush,'
As gently the beach they lave,
'If mortals upon their fate will rush,
They meet it—in the grave.'"

The lower orders of the Siamese have their time too much occupied, and are luckily too poor to admit of their indulging in the excesses of their richer countrymen. Such as are servants are busily engaged about their master's affairs; boatmen are paddling from morning till night and are too glad to avail themselves of the hours of repose in a little friendly chat with their own families and neighbours; they go to roost with the fowls and

turn out with the crows; and the consequence is that they are a robust, healthy people, their only cares in life being food and sleep, for sickness very seldom troubles them. All the Siamese, high and low, rich and poor, wear their hair in a most grotesque and fantastical fashion; the whole of the head is shaved with the exception of a little tuft of hair just over the forehead, which is permitted to grow bolt upright, and has a striking resemblance in shape to a cock's comb. They are all inveterate smokers, and as I have before stated, commence at a very early age to smoke, often before they have entirely relinquished the mother's breast. No man or woman in Siam ever thinks of assisting another that has had the misfortune to be upset; without a single exception they are all expert swimmers, and the first art into which a child is inculcated is the art of self-preservation in the water, and both men and women excel in this. A very serious accident to an American missionary was very nigh resulting from this indifference on the part of the Siamese to assist others in distress. It often happens that Europeans who have been some time resident in Siam paddle themselves about the river both for amusement and exercise, but none should ever attempt this pastime who cannot swim, at least a little, for be sure if any accident happens none will come to your assistance. Brother Jonathan, however, despite the many warnings given him, and the alarming precedent of a missionary having been in reality drowned not much more than a year before he made the attempt, must needs try his skill at paddling also, and of all hours in the twenty-four fixed on seven p.m. for the experiment, a time when the river is most busy, as every one is returning home for the night, and when objects are scarcely discernible, as by half-past seven all the year round it is entirely dark at Bangkok. The result of this rash essay was, that just as he had got about three hundred yards from his house, the canoe jolted up against the cable of a ship, and in one instant was overturned. Jonathan, who could no more swim than a stone could, had instinct enough, however, to cling to the canoe, and it and the luckless man floated down

with the tide. In vain did the unhappy missionary shout and implore for aid, each time he opened his mouth gallons of water rushed down his throat, so he came to the wise resolution of holding his peace and trusting to Providence. By a most fortunate circumstance Mr. Hunter happened to be coming in an opposite direction in his large canoe, and passed close to the drowning missionary; it was now almost perfectly dark, and he would have passed on without paying the slightest attention to so common a sight as a capsised canoe, knowing that the Siamese never require any assistance, as they swim with their boats up to the first vessel they come across, and there laying hold of the ship's cable with one hand, with the other right the canoe; but his attention was attracted to something of monstrous dimensions floating behind him, and this he at once recognised to be one of those huge blue felt American hats which all the missionaries wore for better protection against the sun; immediately backing his canoe, he picked up the luckless being more dead than alive, and conveyed him to his house where, under the attention of Doctor Bradley of the mission, he was very soon put all to rights again.

The Siamese ladies may without the smallest fear of competition proclaim themselves to be *the* ugliest race of females upon the face of the globe. With their hair worn in the same fashion as the men, the same features, same complexion, and same amount of clothing, the man must be a gay Lothario indeed who would be captivated by their leering glances; but as though nature had not formed them sufficiently ugly, these most neglected of all the human species, resort to dyes wherewith to dye their teeth and lips of a jet black colour. The darker the teeth the more beautiful is a Siamese belle considered; and in order that their gums should be of a brilliant red to form a pleasant contrast to the black lips and teeth, they resort to the pleasant pastime of chewing *betel* from morning till night. This *betel* consists first, of the green leaf of the betel, which has a very tart flavour, something like the leaf of the pepper plant; in this

leaf is placed a piece of chunam (the common lime used for building), then a bit of the betel-nut is broken into small pieces, and placed on the chunam, and the leaf being rolled up into something very much like a sailor's quid, is then thrust

SIAMESE WARRIOR.

into the lady's cheek, and is munched and crunched and chewed so long as the slightest flavour is to be extracted, and as they never swallow the juice the results are very detrimental to the cleanliness of the floors of the houses, and of themselves

generally. They commonly make use of two such quids during the day, and this horrid mixture has the effect of dyeing their gums and the whole of the palate and tongue of a blood red colour. Old crones, and very ancient *chronoses* (for both men and women use the betel), who have no longer any teeth to masticate this horrid mixture with, are attended by servants who have a species of small pestle and mortar always about them wherein they reduce the betel into a proper form for the delicate gums of their aged patrons.

Both men and women in Siam marry young, and are consequently prematurely old; a man of twenty-five may be the father of eight or nine children, and the mother of this lot be only perhaps twenty-three. There is a curious anecdote told of the Chinese, for the truth of which, however, no one has yet been able to vouch. They say when a Chinese lady is blessed with an increase to her family, from the moment of her accouchement the unhappy husband is put to bed also, and there detained for forty days, and during this delightful penance he is subjected to all the rigorous treatment of his better half. Should medicine be administered to her, he must partake of it also, and he is strictly confined to the same diet that she is obliged to undergo, which consists on an average, I believe, of about a thimbleful of cream of rice, administered every three hours, to say nothing of the pill at bedtime to prevent indigestion. Be that as it may, in Siam they expose a woman to an ordeal quite as unnecessary as that which the unhappy Chinaman is forced to go through.

No sooner is an heir or heiress born to some happy parent than a wood fire is lit in the room, the windows are carefully closed, and the door left only just so much open as to admit of the smoke, after freely circulating in the room, to make its final exit; this fire is carefully kept lit during a fortnight, and the motives adduced for this smoking process is, that the smell of fire will deter a certain old gentleman who has too much of it at home from passing into the room, and thus preserve the life of

both mother and infant. I saw the wife of one of Mr. Hunter's own servants, in a cottage close to his house, exposed to this ordeal and can therefore vouch for its veracity.

The wives of the nobles and higher classes amuse themselves during the, to them, tedious hours of the day, as most Oriental women of the higher classes generally do ; they fritter the long hours of the day away in gathering flowers, making bouquets and wreaths, singing love-songs and lamentations in a veritable woeful strain, dancing to the music of empty gourds strung as guitars, telling and listening to fabulous tales, lolling listlessly under shady trees, and ruminating on what is next to be done, chewing betel leaves, blackening their teeth, and admiring themselves in mirrors that reflect too faithfully their frightful faces. Orientals universally seem to possess but two exciting topics of conversation—the one about money, the other about food ; their ideas beyond this are limited, they roll round with the world and are content so to do blindfolded, provided the two essential requisites of life are to be had. They know the day only as a time allotted to them to eat, drink, and earn money ; and the night they acknowledge as an appointed time of rest ; beyond this, few permit their imaginations to stray. What the sun is, or how the glorious light of day is derived, why rain falls at certain seasons, and the night-dew at others, how flowers and trees thrive and blossom and put forth green leaves, and yield luscious fruit, where the young bright birds of glorious plumage find a home and the wherewithal to satisfy their cravings, what the cool zephyr blows for, and seas, and oceans, and rivers in continual motion, foam, and leap, or ripple calmly in the sunlight —these are all themes far beyond the grasp of their dormant imaginations. They walk through life blindfolded, turning neither to the left nor to the right, nor ever digressing one inch from the monotony of their every-day life, unless it be to pick up a piece of silver or a morsel of bread. In some eastern countries dress occupies the attention of the younger portion of either sex, and there are exquisites and elegants to be found ; but in

Siam even this is laid aside, as what little clothing they wear never alters in its pattern, though it may in design and colour. The only time a Siamese female may be said to be decently clad is when she is married, and then for the first time in her life she is covered from head to foot in gaily coloured muslins and veils, her face is hid from public gaze, and three days elapse ere she returns to her pristine simplicity of costume; this is the only period during her lifetime that she is thus attired. There is a period when her face is again shrouded and her form enveloped in long white drapery, but few would like to raise her veil and gaze upon the fearful mystery that dwells in her face; it is when the spirit has fled to that long home, "*where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.*"

The Siamese women though utterly devoid of any moral principle are, to do them justice, excellent *housewives;* they toil from sun-rise to sun-down for their husbands and children, cooking, washing, sweeping, and employed upon sundry other household jobs; sometimes they ply the needle for a short time, but this is an accomplishment very rare indeed. The wives of the poorer class of boatmen are often toiling all day, paddling a heavily laden canoe up and down the river, striving to earn a few pence, or *fuangs*, as the small Siamese money is termed, by disposing of their vendibles, be they vegetables, betel-nut, or poultry. The first thing on awaking at early morn, they may be seen disporting in the river, swimming and diving like water fowl, and the last thing at night before retiring to rest, they bathe in the river again. Some days when the heat is very oppressive they go into the water in the middle of the day, and whether there be twenty or two hundred spectators it makes small odds to them, so utterly callous are they to all feelings of propriety and decency. Children so soon as they have been taught to swim, and are efficient in this art, which seems to come naturally to this amphibious people, are initiated in the science of paddling; and for this purpose, every father of a family has a little bit of a canoe attached to his establishment,

with a paddle of proper proportions; then the father gets into his own canoe and paddles away, and the child enters his diminutive canoe and follows in his track, for all the world like a young duck learning to swim. The time when broods of these may be seen upon the river is between one and two o'clock, when pretty nigh all Bangkok are having their siesta. Children having acquired these two indispensable attainments—namely, swimming, and paddling canoes—are then separated, and set about their different vocations in life. The boys are taught all kinds of athletic games, and especially that wonderful Siamese game of battledore and shuttlecock. After this they are permitted, for a year or two, to attend at the watts every day, and there, under the tuition of the priests, acquire some faint notion of their mother-tongue. After this they are launched into life on their own responsibility, the fortune bestowed upon them by the father consisting of a canoe and some paddles, and perhaps a small trifle in money. From this date the boy never sleeps under the paternal roof again, unless in after years by chance or accident; and, somehow or other, they all make their way through life. I never saw a Siamese inhabitant begging for a morsel of bread, the priests always excepted; and then it can no longer be called pauperism, as what they get from door to door is a tax levied on the people, by approbation of government, for the support of the church.

The girls remain at home under the tuition of their mothers, who, while they sadly neglect their moral training, give them a quiet homely education in all the branches of Siamese *housewifery*. They have generally become adepts in this art by the time they are eight years of age, and then they are packed off in canoes to sell all kinds of vendibles, and paddle for miles up and down the river from morn till night; and sometimes, if they have been unsuccessful in their day's sales, these poor girls are kept on the river till past midnight; and, tired and worn, perhaps even without food, the supplicating tone of their voices, as they invite purchasers, is heart-rending in the extreme. The

long and short of it is, that Siamese husbands and wives, and parents and children, possess only a kind of animal instinct, or magnetism, which creates a sensation towards each other almost amounting to friendship, but that holy thing, *love*, is unknown amongst them; as well it may be, for how could so much impurity be caged up with so fair and spotless an emotion? So soon as a girl has attained the age of twelve she is married, and then the parents wash their hands of her for ever; but should no suitor be forthcoming, she is allowed a year's time, and opportunities to gain one. At the expiration of this period, if her efforts have been futile, as is, alas! too often the case, she is then taken by her father to his own shop, and there sold to the highest bidder that may appear within a month's time. Whether, in this state of serfdom, she will be kindly or basely used, whether the father will ever set eyes on his daughter again, is a feeling that never suggests itself to his cold and callous heart. I cannot believe it possible that the women are so utterly void of all maternal feelings; but of the fathers' want of humanity I have too often had ocular demonstration, while plying to and fro upon the river Menam. He regrets, certainly, that she was not married, for then his daughter could have had no ulterior claims upon his hospitality; but now, in case of the death of him to whom he has ruthlessly sold her, or in the event of his being obliged to leave the capital, she must fall back upon his hands, and then ten to one if he is ever able to dispose of her again. Yet, strange to say, notwithstanding this unnatural state of affairs, I seldom heard of a Siamese ill-treating or quarrelling with his wife; and should daughters that have been sold into serfdom fall back upon his hands, they are kindly and gently treated, even though their age forbids all hopes of their ever being turned into gold again. Such, however, is not the treatment of the unhappy girls who oftentimes fall to the lot of Arab merchants from Bombay and the Red Sea, who are residing for commercial purposes at Siam. These often maltreat their unhappy slaves in

the grossest manner; and their cruelties have sometimes reached to such a pitch, that, watching their opportunity, the girls have fled, and sought refuge and protection in the houses of the missionaries. But these instances of inhuman treatment have invariably been traced to the sons of Islam, residing at Bangkok. Neither Siamese, Burmese, Malabars, nor even Malays, have ever been convicted of similar atrocities. The sons of the Prophet, entertaining an innate hatred against all professing any other creed than their own, and especially incensed against idolators, such as the Siamese are, wreak the whole fury of their vengeance upon the unoffending heads of the hapless victims that fall beneath their sway, by being purchased with gold.

Upon the whole, I found the Siamese a civil, humble, and willing people, wrapped in the grossest ignorance and superstition, and lost to all sentiments of moral virtue; but a reform on this score can never be hoped, till they have been made partakers of "the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion."

CHAPTER X.

Dispute between Governments of Siam and Cochin China.—Confiscation of Siamese vessels in Cochin China ports.—Reprisals.—Fury of the King of Siam.—His councils always held at night.—Army sent to frontiers.—Ship of war "the Caledonia" ordered for sea.—Author put in command of two hundred and fifty marines.—Character and discipline of the Ship's crew.—Cruel instructions given to the Officers.—Encounter a severe storm.—Ship nearly lost.—Curious adventures of a cargo of Sugar on board.—Return of Vessel.

OON after I entered the Siamese service, a misunderstanding took place between the Siamese government and the Prince of Cochin China, arising from the ill-treatment by the Siamese soldiery of some merchants of the latter nation. Matters could not be amicably arranged, because the Cochin Chinese were evidently the aggrieved parties, and demanded, very justly, that ample reparation and satisfaction be given to the sufferers. The Siamese government, ignorant, as it was proud, and imagining its land and sea forces to be invincible so long as they kept within the limits of the Siamese

territory, or within the bounds of the Gulf of Siam, treated the affair with contempt and insult, and in direct opposition to the laws of even barbarians, incarcerated the unfortunate ambassador and the whole of his suite, with the exception of one man, who was conducted back to the frontiers of his own country, and there set at liberty that he might proceed to head-quarters and *report progress*. This man was also entrusted with a fulminating letter from the king himself, in which war was openly declared, and many significant threats held out, the least amongst which was, that the potentate of Cochin China might expect if he persisted in sending annoying messages to the kingdom of the White Elephant, to find himself in a very short space of time a partaker of the unfortunate doom that his luckless ambassador was suffering.

It so happened, that at the period when this intelligence reached the imperial court in Cochin China, several Siamese and Chinese trading junks were loading at the various sea ports on the coast for China, Siam, and Singapore. All which sailed under the Siamese flag were immediately seized and confiscated; and the unfortunate crews of these vessels having been first heavily laden with chains, were employed with common criminals in repairing the roads, cutting away forests, breaking stones, and other useful, but by no means agreeable pastimes. The fate of these vessels was in due course reported at Bangkok by the arrival of a Bombay sugar ship from Singapore, where the information had been gleaned from a Chinese junk that had arrived from Cochin China. Nothing could exceed the fury of the king on learning this intelligence, he held nightly councils of war, which all the noblemen and statesmen residing at Bangkok were compelled to attend. Mr. H——, from his position as a peer of the realm, was included in the number, nor would the king on any condition dispense with his presence, as he placed more implicit faith in his sage advice and arguments, than the whole of the others put together. This, though a flattering compliment to H——, was by no means an agreeable one; for,

what with his own occupations during the day, which were often manifold and harassing, and the king's interests to attend to at night, he scarcely had one hour's rest during the twenty-four, the whole time this political litigation lasted. Finally, it was determined to bombard by sea some of the principal sea-port towns, at the same time that a vast army of somewhere about eighty thousand men, was to assemble on the Cochin Chinese frontiers, it having been rightly conjectured, as the sequel proved, that such a formidable display would instil terror into the hearts of the, at all times, timid inhabitants of Cochin China. This large army was to be under the joint command of two very celebrated generals, though for what they were celebrated, I could never distinctly understand, except it be that they had on one occasion outrun the whole of the army in a rather precipitate retreat made from the invading forces of a rebel chief, who, with less than half the number under his command that they had at their disposal, whipped them to their heart's content, and sent them flying to Bangkok for further succour. Nevertheless, they had obtained the name and dignity of being distinguished warriors, and were consequently chosen for this particular purpose. Captain Middleton was ordered to prepare the "Caledonia" immediately for sea, and I was ordered to join his ship, in command of two hundred and fifty marines—such marines as only those semi-barbarous countries could furnish, and about as much skilled in the art of war as a cannibal islander might be in trigonometry. However, they had very smart dresses, and very fine muskets and side arms ; and, as they had been drilled to stand straight and to march, they cut a pretty good figure on board, except when the vessel was rolling or pitching. On such occasions, it was by no means an uncommon event to pick up the sentry somewhere in the lee scuppers, and his musket behind the caboose (or cook's galley). It was a mercy that the cook never got shot, after the repeated unintentional attempts made at his life ; for the impetus with which some of the muskets alighted on the deck (with their muzzles

pointed right into the galley door), was an all-sufficient shock to make them go off of their own accord, and they were always loaded with ball cartridge. Middleton had a singularly rare collection of sailors. Amongst the ship's valiant crew there were Manilla-men, Malays, Gentoos, Malabars, a few Arabs, and a sprinkling of Siamese. The Manilla-men and the Malays were excellent sailors, and so were a few of the Siamese; but, as for the rest, they could no more distinguish one rope from another, than they could prevent themselves from being dreadfully sea-sick. We were not allowed to carry more than the upper tier of guns, because His Majesty thought fit to make this a profitable expedition in a pecuniary way as well as in a political sense, and we were obliged to land all the "'tween deck" guns, as also some of the upper tier, to allow of the ship being laden with sugar by an Arab merchant, who, having received intelligence of a great rise in the sugar market at Bombay, had offered the government a very high freight to permit him to send the sugar to Singapore, to be there trans-shipped on board of a vessel that would be immediately freighted to carry it on to Bombay. The old Arab taking all the risks of insurance upon himself.

The offer was too good to be refused, and we were therefore exposed to the ignominious necessity of proceeding direct to Singapore with a cargo of sugar; after discharging which and ballasting, we were to cruise for a couple of months off the coast of Cambogia, and as far as Pulo Obi, occasionally running in and heaving to off a town, and giving it the benefit of three or four stunning broadsides. Particular orders were given to the captain to watch the movements of such Cochin Chinese junks as might be lying off Singapore, and to dodge them if possible into the China Sea, and there give them chase. One thousand tikols in silver being the reward held forth to the captain for every such junk captured, and five hundred was to be my share of prize money. I must do Middleton the justice to say that it was his firm determination from the very commencement to act in

direct contradiction to his orders as regarded the junks; his intention having been to give them every possible chance of escaping, not only on account of the unrighteousness of the act towards the owners of the cargo and the vessel, but also as it regarded the innocent crews of these junks, who would, if taken to Bangkok, undergo every hardship and cruelty that barbarity could inflict. Things were soon completed, the cargo shipped, and the vessel reported ready for sea; but before leaving the river, Capt. M. got the royal permission to fire a salute before quitting his Majesty's floating city. Every Englishman in the place was on board, ships' crews and all, to assist us in this mighty undertaking, as also in getting the vessel unmoored. When the firing commenced, it was the best fun imaginable to see the Manilla gunners trying to get their gangs into something like ship-shape order, for the moment a match was presented to a touch-hole, they took to their heels and fled to that part of the vessel which was furthest from the spot; nor could the Serang's lash or the Tindal's oaths induce them to budge one inch till the smoke had fairly cleared away. Notwithstanding all these drawbacks, the salute was fired with admirable precision, thanks to the assistance rendered by the British tars on board. At length we took leave of our kind and hospitable hosts, and other friends at Bangkok; and with a list of commissions large enough to consume a moderate fortune, all of which we were to be sure and execute at Singapore, and very many prayers for our safety from the old Arab merchant who had shipped the sugar, we sailed down the river with a spanking breeze and strong tide in our favour; and made such progress down, that we cleared the bar at daylight next morning, and leaving the pilot on board a junk outside the river, set all imaginable sail, and were soon scudding along at the rate of ten miles an hour, with a breeze as favourable as it could be, direct for Singapore. This kind of weather lasted us for two days and a night, and then the wind began to veer round in a directly contrary direction, with every appearance of a thorough change in the

weather; and the heavy banks of clouds on the horizon right a-head, indicating something that looked rather suspiciously like a coming hurricane, or a China Sea typhoon. The heavy swell of the sea as it rolled in mountainous waves towards the Cambogian shore, the high land of which was now in sight, made the vessel pitch and roll most woefully. As the evening closed in the breeze entirely ceased, and then the heavy-laden vessel became quite unmanageable. Captain M., who had left both his lieutenants behind; one to assume command of a little four-gun brig, which was also ordered for service; and the other, in a bed of sickness, was left entirely at the mercy of the Manilla seacunies, or helmsmen, for the steering of the vessel, and to the adroitness of the Malayan Serang and Tindal, to see all necessary orders promptly executed; for the swell of the sea was so great, that the vessel was in danger of rolling her masts overboard. In this dilemma I was pressed into the service, and had to perform the duties of an officer of the ship during the rest of this most disastrous voyage; a birth that was by no means a sinecure, but which I cheerfully accepted, partly from the esteem I had for the captain, as noble a fellow as ever trod a ship's deck, and partly from a wish to acquire nautical knowledge; for I had before this period been to sea professionally, and was then passionately attached to a seafaring life. The first thing done was to lash the guns with treble lashings. The lower and topmast riggings were then set up by means of what sailors call Spanish windlasses; royal and top-gallant yards were sent down, and the top-gallant masts struck and housed; the top-sails were close reefed, and the fore-sail single reefed; preventer backstays were passed from the fore and main top-mast, and the jib-boom was well secured. Things being made snug and *comme il faut*, the whole of the crew were summoned aft, and divided into two instead of four watches, as had heretofore been the regulation. Captain M. and the boatswain's mate commanded the starboard watch, myself and the boatswain the larboard; but, in point of fact, poor M. never was off watch.

During the daytime he had snatches of repose, lying on a sofa in the cabin; but at night in bad weather he was never below. Midnight approached, and the calm still continued; not a breath stirred in the Heavens; but the swell went on increasing in violence, and the vessel rolled gunwales under. Many of the crew, who were quite griffins at sea, began to evince evident symptoms of sea-sickness, and as the watch struck the hour of midnight on the great booming bell of the ship, the last available marine sunk down by the side of the starboard gangway in a state of most deplorable debility from the effects of the rolling of the vessel. Yes! his Siamese Majesty's detachment of royal Siamese marines, under the command of the reader's humble servant, the author, were, at ten minutes after twelve on that eventful night, decidedly *hors de combat!*

During the whole of that long dark night, the intense calm was unbroken. The cables, which were unbent from the anchors and stowed away on the first morning of our departure, were again dragged forth by lantern-light, and bent on afresh. The anchors were cleared, so as to be let drop at a moment's warning; and though we could not see ten yards beyond the ship, we knew, from the direction in which the swell was running, that the vessel had been drifting on a lee-shore the whole twelve hours of the night, and morning was never more anxiously looked for. About a quarter of an hour before day-break we had a cast of the deep sea lead, and then, to our great concern, we discovered that we were fast getting into shoal-water; a sad fact, which was soon after confirmed to us by the distinct roaring of the waves, as they broke upon the distant shore. Here was a precious predicament! Not wind enough even to give the vessel steerage way, and the ship rapidly approaching a dangerous coast, where, if we escaped being drowned or dashed to pieces amongst the rocks, we should only survive to become the prisoners of a cruel people, who were at all times noted for their barbarous treatment of captives, and who, at this particular period, were much exasperated against the

Siamese, and all in any way connected with them. All hands were turned out to be ready to let go the anchors; and as day broke we came to in fifteen fathoms water, with two anchors, and a hundred and thirty fathoms of cable on the bitts—his Siamese Majesty's detachment of marines being still decidedly *hors de combat.* With what fury that sea swept wildly by us rearing up its foamy crest, and occasionally sweeping the vessel right fore and aft! With what violence would the waves lash, and thump, and tug at our poor ship, endeavouring to drag her with them on their headlong, heedless, fearless race, to perdition! and then, in sullen anger, trumpet forth their disappointed rage, as some unshakeable rock burst their fury, and sent them whining and foaming far up into the air in million particles of snow-white froth! These are things only to be felt when seen. No painter's brush—no poet's song—no earth-inspired scribe—could even trace one faint resembling outline of the sad majestic reality of such a scene. Morning broke, and daylight spread her light mantle over the earth and sea. It was not so fair and brilliant as it was wont to be on a brighter, calmer summer's morning; but still it shed that mysterious, blessed light through which the human eye could clearly penetrate, and the hidden dangers of the night became revealed. We looked ahead the ship's bows to the waves, and on the wide expanse of ocean nothing but restless billows met the view; but from their violent and continued conflict it was clearly indicated that the long-looked-for hurricane had reached that spot, and was now madly sporting with the waves. A high headland to windward, past which we had most miraculously drifted in the night, as yet kept the gale from reaching us; but it was evident that, in a very few minutes' time, the whole fury of the tempest would burst over our devoted vessel, and, in all probability at the very first onset, part her from her anchors, and send us with fearful velocity amongst a long ledge of rocks that ran parallel with the shore for many hundred yards. We looked over the stern of the vessel—high-peaked, lofty, towering

hills, capped with the storm-cloud, and descending almost perpendicularly to the sea, were all to be seen on that side to cheer us. To the southward of these was a gap in the mountain-range, and the sea ran smooth upon the fine sandy beach; but on that beach were plainly discernible hundreds of little figures running to and fro, and gesticulating to each other in a frenzy of delight. They had discovered the vessel, and probably guessed from whence she came, and their thirst for revenge and pillage would now, they imagined, be soon amply gratified. Now, although all this takes a long time to recount or write, this sad survey of our position and chances was the work of a few minutes, and our resolutions were as speedily taken. Were we to slip, and run the ship aground in the spot where these natives were congregated, the chances were, under any other circumstances, that both our lives and the cargo would be saved; but though we had a large body of men on board, one-half of them might have been knocked down with a feather, they had suffered so severely from the effects of the sea; and the other half were too great cowards to make any resistance: hence death, in some form or another, awaited us there. There only remained, therefore, one last forlorn hope, that of being enabled to catch the first puff of wind with all available canvas set, and endeavour to beat the ship out to windward, at the risk of sails and masts. If these stood we might be saved: if they went, then adieu "Caledonia!" and all that was left would be to take to the boats, which, though we had six good ones, could hardly have lived in such a sea as was then running. Accordingly, everything was prepared to slip, and the boats kept ready and supplied with water and bread, so that they might be used at a moment's warning. The few minutes that elapsed between this period and the time that the gale reached us, were moments of awful suspense. All reefs had been shook out, and the sails sheeted home. The first wild blast of the hurricane swept over us like a demon in its might—the vessel was on her beam-ends for a few seconds—the anchors were gone—and righting slowly

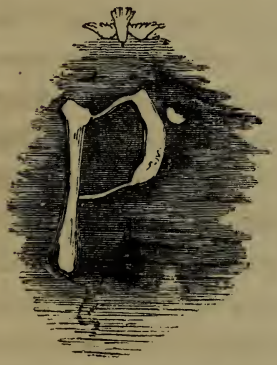
again to her water-mark, just as everything seemed lost, and the terrible reef was within range of rifle-shot, and shooting boldly out into the very midst of the tempest-tost ocean, she sped along majestically, luffing well up into the wind's eye, and bidding defiance to all the angry tumults of the elements—"Thank God we're saved," said Middleton, who was at the helm, as he felt the barque, obedient to his unerring arm, answer the rapid movements of the wheel, and just as these words had died away we passed safe through all the noisy, angry strife of wind and waters. Those high mountains of Cambogia, echoing the cry from vale to vale, brought to our listening ears the faint and distant, yet too distinct whoop of disappointed revenge uttered by that horde of marauding cut-throats on shore, who had been speculating on our lives and property. The further we got from the shore the more violent the hurricane blew, but, as the sequel proved, fortunately for us, the gale veered round a couple of points in our favour, so that under close-reefed topsails and a storm staysail, we were enabled to make a very long stretch on the starboard tack. It rained, it blew, it thundered, it lightened, but still the brave ship sped onward on her course, and for six-and-twenty hours not a sail was trimmed or a rope touched. After this lapse of time the gale still continuing with unabated fury, we sighted some portion of the Malay peninsula, and immediately put the ship about on our losing tack : we had been two days on this tack, and had not got half across the gulf when the morning watch discovered that a great quantity of sugar was being pumped up with the bilge water, from which it was evident that the ship had proved leaky in some part. Luckily for us, on this tack she had made so much leeway that we were now nearly in the same parallel of latitude as we were when lying at anchor off Cambogia. The pumps were sounded and eight feet water in the hold reported ; in ten minutes we sounded again, and the leak had increased six inches, and by daylight, though the pumps were kept continually at work, we had fourteen feet water in the hold, and the

leak was fast gaining upon us. Now indeed had our misfortunes come to a crisis; we had no hope or nothing to strive for except to put the ship right before the wind, and run direct for the mouth of the river. This was very soon accomplished, and then as the pumps were insufficient to keep the vessel from settling and going down bow foremost, the hatches were all unbattened, and every bucket in the ship put into requisition. Men were placed in the 'tween decks and handed up bucketsful of water to others on deck, and as for the poor old Arab's sugar, not one grain of it was left from one end of the ship to the other; it had all melted away and formed a nasty saccharine mixture of salt water and sugar. Even the buckets were not sufficient to keep the leak from gaining on us, and large wash deck tubs were swung to the back-stays, and separate gangs kept to haul them up and heave the water overboard, and his Siamese Majesty's detachment of Royal Siamese Marines had this congenial task allotted to them. They were no longer *hors de combat*, fear and self-preservation had effectually cured them of sea-sickness, and they worked with indefatigable zeal. We had set the ship before the wind at three o'clock in the morning, by twelve we had the satisfaction of finding that our efforts to keep the leak under were successful, as only twelve feet water was reported from the pumps; and at five p.m. we ran the "Caledonia" slap over the bar of Siam, and were off Paknam again, and in smooth water just as the sun was setting. The leak now rapidly diminished, from which it appeared evident that it must be in some part of the bow of the vessel, rather high out of the water through which the rolling waves forced an entrance. The gale was still blowing, though with much greater moderation than out at sea; it suited our ends capitally, we sped up the river like a steamer, and at eight o'clock next morning were anchored off Mr. H.'s house at Bangkok, much to the amazement and alarm of all parties concerned, who were surprised to see a deeply laden vessel after a lapse of ten days, return again as light as a feather, and towering high out of the water. The first care was to land

the guns, which endangered the ship's safety, as she had no ballast in her; the next was to inspect the leak, and then it was discovered that a whole plank had sprung just above the water-mark, and it was indeed a miraculous event that either the vessel or ourselves ever reached Bangkok. Old Hadji Fattala came on board to inquire how his sugar fared, and he found as cleanly swept a hold as ever a ship could boast of. The old fellow in the first outburst of his fury, swore that he would prosecute both Middleton and myself, as the accident must have occurred through our negligence, and then he tore his beard out by handfulls, and capered and danced round the deck after a most grotesque fashion, pausing every now and then to mumble forth maledictions against everybody who had led him into this speculation, and finally he sat down and wept for the money that was gone. It was impossible to help pitying the old fellow, but had he been a little less avaricious, he might have shipped his sugar in tubs and casks, and not in bulk, and thus, perhaps, have saved one half the cargo. The "Caledonia" was docked that very evening; but before she proceeded down the river she landed a great portion of her crew, his Siamese Majesty's Royal Siamese Marines, and their Commander included, as also the cook, who had so often been nearly shot, and who took a vow that he would never sail with marines again, if they gave him twenty times as much pay as he then received. This was my first and last expedition to sea on active service. A week afterwards I was transferred to the Siamese Cavalry and attached to the Prince's body-guard, and the next day I was placed upon the staff, as aid-de-camp to his Royal Highness the Prince Chou-Faa, an appointment that agreed with my complaint amazingly, having plenty to get and little or nothing to do, except walking about in a smart dress, with chain straps and gilt spurs.

CHAPTER XI.

Trade of Siam.—Imports from China.—Excellent quality of Tea.—Sugar Candy, Silks, Cloths, Ivory Carvings, Writing Paper, Toys, &c.—Mode in which business is transacted with Chinese Junks.—All the crew owners and traders.—Harmony with which they manage their affairs.—Imports from India.—Meagreness of Imports from Britain.—Exports.—System on which business is conducted.—Treatment of Bankrupts.—Reasons for supposing that trade between Britain and Siam could be greatly extended.



PERFECT information regarding the exact quantities of the imports and exports of Siam cannot be obtained, but a few general remarks will be interesting. Siam imports annually from China a vast quantity of the very best quality of tea, infinitely superior to what I have ever tasted in India, the Straits of Malacca, or even in China itself. This arises from the inhabitants of Bangkok, many of whom are of Chinese origin, being such connoisseurs of the article itself, and consuming such a large amount annually, that none but the very finest quality will ever find a market at Canton or Macao. One never tastes such tea as is to be found in the private houses of Chinese gentlemen; that which they export to Europe and to the Indian Continent possessing not half the aroma of what is consumed in China and Siam. China also supplies Bangkok with sugar-candy, the Siamese being unable to make anything that can approach it in transparency and sweetness. From Macao and Canton are also brought elegantly wrought China

silks and satins, nankeens, grass cloth, tinsel, exquisitely carved ivory fans, fine painted feather fans, rice paper, and colourings upon rice paper, Japanese trays and tea-caddies, boxes of ivory worked puzzles, elegant Mosaic cut silver card-cases, bales of Chinese writing-paper, boxes of water-colours, cakes of the finest Indian ink, and a vast deal of bird's nests, glues, gums, pickles, and endless preserves, with a few straw hats, and Chinese slippers. Immediately on arriving at Bangkok the junks coming from China, which are often nearly fourteen hundred tons burthen, spread a large awning fore and aft the vessel, which is so arranged as to assume the form of the roof of a house, the awning slanting off on either side of the vessel, so as in case of rain, to carry the water over the sides and prevent its penetrating to the decks; this done, all hands are busily employed erecting temporary stalls on either side of the deck, in which samples of the articles imported for sale are tastefully displayed so as to attract the visitor's attention; between these stalls, a wide passage is left to admit of the passage to and fro of such as visit the junk to make purchases; and all things being prepared for public inspection, flags are hoisted, and discordant gongs sounded to announce to the world at large that they are now at liberty to gratify their curiosity and spend their money. Almost every soul on board of these junks has an interest in the vessel. They are owners, and supercargoes, and sailors, and cooks, and sail-makers, and captains by turns, and the cargo is usually entirely their own, each having separate partitions in the hold wherein his articles of export and import merchandise are stowed. Having accomplished the arduous duties allotted to each during a tedious and oftentimes dangerous sea voyage, they are at the termination of every trip metamorphosed into merchants or shopkeepers, and, seated on low cane chairs opposite their respective shops, invite customers to purchase by long laudatory harangues in favour of their respective goods. Amongst other articles imported, and one which I omitted to enumerate, is a great variety of really

very pretty and ingenious toys, such as carriages and carts, which on being wound up like a watch, run for several minutes over the floor to the no small delight of precocious children, who generally soon put a stop to all movements in their thirst after knowledge, which leads them to the investigation of the interior of these toys, to the utter destruction of the fragile machinery.

Many of the goods imported are destined for the Singapore market; such, for instance, as the more richly-wrought silks and satins, the ivory and feather fans, and some portion of the preserves. In such a place as Bangkok, where the fashion is to wear as little clothing as one possibly can, and where such a thing as a *tailor's bill* was never heard of, the silks and satins are of course in small requisition. There are no operas, or theatres, or other places of public amusement, where the ladies might sport fans; and as for the preserves, the Siamese prefer their own home-made delicacies to those brought from China; hence these articles would be a dead loss, were it not for speculative merchants that trade with Singapore and Bombay; and these buy up such goods *en masse*, retailing them to their correspondents at the two above-named places, to the tune of somewhere about fifty per cent. nett profit. Seldom are these Chinese junks long in the river before the whole of their import cargoes are completely cleared away. The temporary stages are then taken down; each man prepares his portion of the hold for the reception of such export goods as he thinks are most suited for the China market. These outward cargoes are either purchased, or have been bartered for; and it is surprising what a variety of articles are shipped on board the same junk, hardly two amongst her many masters speculating in the same commodity. This is a wise precaution adopted by the Chinese on both their outward and homeward voyages; it prevents their interests clashing together, and excludes all possibility of disputes or quarrels arising on this score. They live together like one large family, each being happy and contented in his own pursuits, and wishing and aiding one another to do their

best, because no rivalry exists between them. The necessary expenses of the vessel and of their maintenance are divided equally, share and share, among them. I imagine the greatest item in their bill for provisions must be pigs and ducks, for I never yet was on board of a China junk that had not both these members of what is termed the *live stock* in abundance. During the whole period that a junk remains in the river, three preventive officers are stationed on board to prevent the possibility of opium being smuggled into the capital; but I have reason to believe that these kind-hearted officers are often blinded to the faults of those around them by the donation of a couple or three Spanish dollars.

India and the Straits send to Siam a few drugs and common cloths, such as Masulipatam manufactured cloth, palampoors for bed-covering, common gingham, &c., and a large supply of Turkey red cloth. The imports from Great Britain are very meagre, being entirely confined to such goods as are received by Messrs. Hunter and Hayes from Liverpool, and which, during my stay at Bangkok, did not exceed about one thousand bales per annum of manufactures and cotton twist. A vast field is open for the introduction of these goods, and probably since my departure from Bangkok more mercantile houses have established themselves at that capital.

In exports, the business done by Siam is very great, and much more could be done. Not fewer than twenty vessels left Bangkok for Singapore and Bombay in 1841 entirely laden with sugar in bulk, their measurement amounting to nearly four thousand tons. Besides these, four vessels left for England direct with assorted cargoes of teas, sugar, ivory, gamboge, dye-woods, lead, spices, drugs, &c.; and as for what was exported to China, the one article of betel-nut alone must have yielded the revenue a handsome income. But could inducements be offered to European vessels to frequent this port; had they a ready market for the disposal of European merchandise (which the jealousy of the Government interdicts, except to a very small

amount), and were the duties levied on vessels in the shape of tonnage dues abated or done away with; in short, were the Siamese at liberty to lay open the great resources they have for enriching the country, the Government, and the people, then I may safely state that upwards of one thousand English vessels might find ample occupation in trading to and from Siam, the Indian continent, and Great Britain, the staple commodities of sugar, rice, pepper, dye-woods and lead, being alone sufficient to load more than half that number. That Siam contains many rich mines of different metals which have been yet unexplored, and that the interior may furnish many gums and other rich produce as unknown to European markets as gutta-percha was not many years since, I have not the slightest doubt; and were an expedition of scientific men permitted to visit those parts of the kingdom as yet unexplored by a civilised people, rich indeed would be the reward of those travellers in the store of knowledge they would accumulate, and in the additions that might be made to the various branches of science.

Most of the commercial transactions of the merchants residing at Bangkok amongst themselves and with known and respected residents, are upon the system of *tic*, or credit, for longer or shorter periods. Wholesale purchasers are allowed to have a year's time to liquidate the amount, paying the sum in quarterly instalments, and the shortest credit given is forty days. This system of traffic is very detrimental to European merchants, who experience the greatest difficulty in recovering debts due to them when the period for payment arrives; and fraudulent bankruptcies are by no means of unfrequent occurrence. Mr. H—— was obliged to employ several men, who acted as commercial spies upon the creditors of the firm, and gave timely notice of anything approaching to a shut up. On such information being obtained, the measures adopted were stringent and immediate; the debtor was seized before he had the slightest inkling of his roguery having been discovered; his house, goods

and chattels, were taken possession of by the distraining creditor, and he himself borne off to the palace of justice, where he was immediately made to undergo every torture that human invention could inflict, till he was at length very lothfully forced to confess the exact amount of treasure he possessed—a confession which usually led to the discovery of the rogue having accumulated far greater wealth than what was necessary to liquidate his debts, but which he had skilfully concealed, in the hopes of at some future period being enabled to quit the kingdom with his ill-gotten wealth.

Situated as Siam is, between two great emporiums of British commerce (I allude to Singapore and Canton), affording as it does so many inducements for the establishment of friendly intercourse, both with respect to export trade and to its requisite consumption of British manufactured goods, as also the fact of its being not only an excellent harbour of refuge, but *the only one* in existence between China and Singapore, it is much to be regretted that no binding and equitable treaty, based on a liberal footing, exists between Her Majesty's Government and the Court of Siam ; such a treaty as might entitle our nation to the enjoyment of privileges, at once a boon to the English, and no less conducive to the welfare of the Siamese. This, however, was a desideratum not attainable during the lifetime of the late despotic and superstitious sovereign and his predecessors. These, too darkly ignorant to appreciate what was most conducive to the increase of their own wealth and importance, have invariably repulsed and regarded in the light of an infringement upon their (in their own opinions) enlightened sense and wisdom, any advances made by foreign powers for the amelioration of their social condition and the furtherance of traffic. Ever watching with a jealous eye the prowess of British arms in the East, and terrified beyond measure with the termination of the Chinese expedition in later years, it was no part of the king's policy to encourage the advent of speculative strangers into his territories, or in any way to

countenance the frequent overtures made to him by the British, French, and American Governments. In the king's private estimation, *amphibious Europeans*, and more especially the English, whose numerous vessels declared them to his fevered imagination to be a people inhabiting *the ocean*, had only to set eyes upon his extensive, rich, and fertile dominions, and his sceptre would speedily pass from his sway. It was a thing almost incredible, not only to the king, but to the Siamese nation, that China, their elder brother, the nearest relation of the sun, and the beloved country of the gods, should actually be compelled to acknowledge themselves vanquished by people hitherto estimated as barbarians, and compelled to yield portions of their country, and disburse a plentiful amount of their dollars, to a set of *water rats* who had, as if by magic, assailed their country in vessels of all sizes and shapes; their jealous and wary precautions were then redoubled, every stranger looked upon as a spy, and the quiet missionaries, who had for many years resided in the harmless pursuit of their special avocations, were watched with unwearying assiduity. It was never believed that the English could, without supernatural assistance, have accomplished the marvellous feats they were reported to have accomplished in China; and what strengthened the Siamese in this opinion was the existence of an *electrifying machine*, an air-gun, and a few other to them incomprehensible instruments in the possession of a peaceful American, whose whole duty of life was the study of nature. One missionary, Brother C——, a species of catechist and schoolmaster, had great suspicion attached to his name, from the singular propensity he had of obtaining the sun's altitude by means of a false horizon in a large bucket of tar, with the assistance of a time-worn quadrant. Never a day passed, but what Brother C—— might be seen rushing out bareheaded into the balcony of his house, which overhung the river, gazing, as the natives imagined, to all intents and purposes, into a vast vacancy. The natives, naturally inquisitive to investigate the motives that

gave rise to so strange a freak, asked Brother C—— several questions, to which he invariably replied that he was finding out the exact minute of mid-day from the sun; such an answer being incontrovertibly proved to be the fact by such examples as, for instance, a native watching the hour-hand of a clock, hidden from the missionary's view, and hearing him proclaim it mid-day, just as the hand pointed out the same hour, went far with the Siamese to convict Brother C—— of sorcery; and these reports coming to the king's ears, there is little doubt but that he would have been forcibly expelled from Bangkok, had not the Praklan, or prime minister, by dint of much patience and perseverance, explained to his grossly ignorant Majesty the simple truths of the fact.

To such an extent was the suspicion of the Siamese monarch awakened by late events, that though possessed of several splendid ships of war, well armed and equipped, no persuasion could induce him to permit of their making any sea voyages which should extend further than the limits of the Siamese Gulf, with the exception only of Singapore, and an occasional visit to China. He preferred that they should rot for months together in the sweet waters of the Menam, rather than that they should risk being seen by the falcon eye of some British cruiser. He had no idea of impartial justice, and weighed others in the same scale with himself and the Cochin-Chinese.

The Prince Chou-Faa, who is reported to have succeeded to the throne, is the very antithesis of his royal predecessor; for though born amidst savages, or at least a semi-civilised people, he possesses an innate love of literature, of religion, and science. He has often confidentially hinted, that he prayed to see the day arrive when the gates of Siamese commerce might be opened to the world at large. That day, I have little doubt, has now arrived. In him, any ambassador invested with full powers to treat, would find a courteous, wise, and intelligent man; one willing and ready to advance every means of improvement. His perfect knowledge of English would enable him to

dispense with that bane to friendly and upright intercourse and conversation—a cringing, and most generally prevaricating, interpreter. Anything fair and honest, affording like privileges to both sides, would meet with his instant approval; and what the benefits derivable are likely to be, I shall endeavour concisely and clearly to explain.

First, let us consider Siam in the light of a harbour of refuge.

Heretofore, the exorbitant tax levied in the shape of tonnage-dues upon all vessels under a foreign flag, were of themselves sufficient to exclude effectually the possibility of the Menam affording shelter and rest to the tempest-tost ship and fatigued and care-worn mariner. But this was not all. No stranger was permitted, for any consideration, to cross the bar, and enter the river without a special permit being previously obtained from the king himself; a transgression of this law subjecting the vessel and cargo to immediate forfeiture, and the pilot, captain, and crew, to imprisonment and other severe punishment. The pilot, indeed, was considered guilty of a capital offence, and condemned to death, if he was convicted; for him there was no hope of a palliation of the punishment, as it was a public law that every pilot, before boarding any vessel in the offing, or anchored in the outer roads, must be furnished with the royal permit, backed by the official seal of the governor of Paknam, the nearest sea-port town on the river. This permit was never granted, except in case of a friendly visit from a vessel of war, and then it was a tacitly understood arrangement that the cannon, &c., were to be landed at Paknam, though this stipulation was seldom or never complied with, as very few war vessels ever made a sufficiently long stay to think the risk and trouble of crossing the bar worthy the attempt; unless it were specified, firstly, that the vessel and all on board would quietly submit and subject themselves to the annoying process and unnecessary visits and inquisitive scrutiny of the Custom-house officers at Paknam. Secondly, that the captain of the vessel should, before proceeding further up the

river, deposit in the governor's hands, or else give ample security for the due payment of, the tonnage dues, which were somewhere about two tikals per ton measurement (the tikal being equal to about eighteen-pence sterling, would make the sum levied on a vessel of about 300 tons no less than forty-five pounds sterling). And, thirdly, that it be specified that the vessel, before leaving the river again, should be obliged to load a full and complete cargo of Siamese produce, the export dues on which were even more disproportionately large and unjust than those imposed on the ship's tonnage.

Under such disadvantageous circumstances, a vessel overtaken by a typhoon, dismasted, leaky, and wholly unmanageable, however favourable her position with regard to the mouth of the Menam, however fair the wind may be to run to that shelter, has no inducement to make the attempt, and no option but to battle out the fury of the elements, and strained in every timber, eventually reach some port in China, or in the Malacca Straits; else, unequal to the effort, founder with valuable cargoes and still more valuable lives, far from the hope of rescue or any eventual succour. This is no over-wrought picture drawn from fancy's brain. Insurance offices can bear most lamentable testimony to the unusual loss of life and property in the China seas. I do not presume to say that this could be altogether remedied were Bangkok to a certain extent a free port; but I am persuaded that many a vessel has foundered between the longitudes of Pulo Obi and Singapore, and many more still met with material damage and loss, which might have been in a great measure alleviated or avoided had Siam held out any inducement to the tempest-tost sailor to alter his course, relinquish ineffectual tacking against a hurricane, and stand before the wind for the river Menam. But of course heretofore this was impracticable; few vessels pass to and from India and China save those that are both ways deeply laden. Such ships as are regularly in the China trade from Calcutta and Bombay are chiefly freighted with opium—a drug which the Siamese Government publicly

condemn and utterly prohibit, and which would subject the vessel to instant confiscation. Hence a ship seeking refuge in the Menam, and arriving off the bar in a sinking state, might go down at her moorings before assistance could be procured, and would certainly have done so before any concession would have been made by the Government of the late King. There was a choice of evils left; were the vessel in distress an opium trader, her only chance was to throw her unusually valuable cargo overboard, pay heavy dues on entering, incur heavy expenses in docking, be compelled to produce funds sufficient to purchase an outward cargo, or be freighted for a mere song by some avaricious Arab merchant; or else to keep afloat as she best could till the storm abated, and if she could not, go down with all hands. Only imagine the delightful humour the owner would be in, in the last case. The cargo of opium was worth perhaps fifty thousand pounds; the vessel was his own, and both it and the cargo well insured; but the wretch of a captain, and those worthless fellows the crew (who, by the way, are ready to shed their blood in the service, and have oftentimes severe brushes with the Chinese on the Eastern coast), being overtaken by a dreadful hurricane, in which the vessel loses all her masts, has the bulwarks, boats, and half the crew washed away, springs a leak which is hourly gaining upon them, and, to complete the picture, the pumps are choked and utterly useless,—in this dilemma, the captain, aided and abetted by his rascally crew (for so the merchant styles them), instead of quietly saying their prayers, settling down with the vessel, and going peacefully to the bottom, and so securing the owner's interest, and cheating the insurance, actually have the audacity to think of setting up jury masts, and standing before the wind for Siam, where, luckily for themselves, they arrive in safety; but, being aware of the stringent laws of the country, the first thing they do is to throw the opium overboard. The vessel we may suppose to be about 300 tons burthen; she pays her entrance duty, dock charges, &c., and gets taken up for a lump sum to carry a cargo of sugars to

Bombay, the freight on which amounts to somewhere about 150*l.* Now the dockyard charges and tonnage dues amount to at least double that amount, and have been paid by the skipper on the guarantee of a bottomry bond ; hence the owner's entry of profit and loss that voyage runs nearly as follows :—

Dr.	£	s.	d.	Cr.	£	s.	d.
To Profit on Freight .	150	0	0	By loss on opium . .	50,000	0	0
„ Nett loss by damage to cargo, &c. of clipper "Blazes" . .	51,150	0	0	„ Damage to vessel .	1000	0	0
				„ Repairs and dues .	300	0	0
	51,300	0	0		51,300	0	0

There are very few captains that would not rather meet fifty deaths than one owner after the receipt of such an account. None would be induced to run for Siam under existing circumstances, unless he had made up his mind to run altogether from home, friends and his senses, and bidding adieu to Europe for ever, embrace the Siamese faith, eschew pleasure, turn priest and celebrate a fanatical jig for the special behoof of the white elephants.

Second : with regard to the import trade. Under existing circumstances it is very limited in comparison to what it might be, considering the dense population of the Siamese dominions, but the heavy taxation of the poorer classes places European manufacture and produce quite out of their reach, because the heavy duties levied upon imports compel merchants to retail these goods at exorbitant prices, so as to enable them to have a profit worthy of the risk and expense incurred in bringing these goods such a distance. But the fact speaks for itself when I say, that, notwithstanding the many drawbacks and the heavy stumbling-blocks in the shape of taxes and other duties placed as impediments in the way of a thriving commerce, Bangkok and its immediate neighbourhood afford a ready market for a by no means meagre supply of British stuffs ; a proof that the profit accruing on the original valuation of goods must be enormous indeed, as it enables the merchant to pocket a respectable nett profit, after the freight, and insurance, and

innumerable local dues are deducted from the price current at Bangkok. The same argument will hold good with respect to the articles of export trade. Great indeed must be the gain upon these in European markets when we consider that they also are not only liable to all the drawback enumerated in the import trade, but in addition to, and over and above all these, most of the staple articles of the Siamese produce are grown or are collected many hundred miles in the interior, and their prime cost value must therefore, of necessity, be considerably augmented by the expenses of inland carriage, both by land and water, before reaching the market at Bangkok.

Now a remedy to all the foregoing evils presents itself by the supreme power of the realm having devolved upon a man open to every practicable suggestion for the cause of humanity, the amelioration of the condition of the natives, and for the extension of Siamese commerce. A favourable opportunity thus presents itself for the laying of a firm foundation for friendly and commercial intercourse with a nation heretofore but little known to Europe in general, an intercourse which would inevitably open a new market for every manufactory in the United Kingdom, by drawing from them constant supplies of every imaginable article requisite both for the luxury and comfort of a vast and almost wholly unexplored empire ; at the same time that the security afforded to travellers would add vastly to our store of science, by affording us a knowledge of places and races of men, of birds, beasts, fishes, vegetable and animal productions, yet unheard of, as new as they may prove immensely useful : and the sense, the touch, the taste, the sight, in short every virtuous appetite tending to moral pleasure, be gratified and delighted by flowers, fruits, &c., up to this day a mystery to the inquisitive mind of man.

By the exercise of a little engineering skill, and at a small expense, the entrance to the Menam might be greatly improved. The banks are composed of sand and clay, closely set, and these by the great ebb of water at the lowest tide are left for several

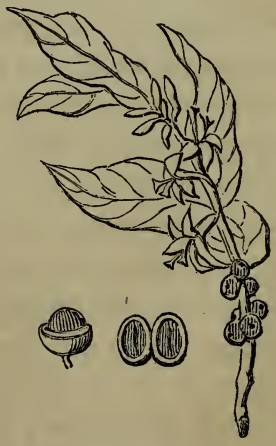
hours high and dry. It would be easy therefore, either to construct a permanent channel navigable at all hours by vessels of the largest tonnage, or else a more simple method, and one attended with much less expense would be, to erect two pillars of stone or iron, whichever may be thought best, to indicate that part of the bank where the greatest depth of water may be had, and between these pillars, serving as beacon gates, any vessel may, in cases of emergency, run aground should the water be too low to pass over, and wait for a returning tide to float her into the river. These pillars might be marked with figures indicating the depth of water, and from surveying which any vessel anchored in the roadstead may, without the aid of a pilot, and by a simple knowledge of their own draught of water, enter the mouth of the Menam as the tide served. These pillars might be so constructed as to serve for light-houses during the night, and the original cost and expenses of keeping them in repair, &c., be amply repaid, and yield an abundant surplus, by levying a small toll on every vessel and junk that entered the river. A very convenient and commodious dock-yard, and one in every way sheltered, might be easily constructed a few miles above Pakman. And between that town and Paklo Belo, vessels arriving with cargoes damaged might land all the goods, have them warehoused, and well-aired, and undergo whatever operations were necessary in very little more than a week; thus, at the same time that a valuable ship and cargo would be saved from utter destruction, the local government would derive emolument from the tolls levied in the shape of dock and lighthouse dues, &c., while merchants and private individuals would likewise reap benefit from wharfage, warehousing, porterage, and many other indispensable expenses both incidental and necessary. Provision merchants would likewise drive a thriving trade, and be induced, under the milder sway of Chou-Faa, to form a branch establishment at Pulo Obi for the supply of vessels bound to and from the Straits of Malacca. Many vessels would prefer, when the monsoons admitted,

stocking their vessels with poultry and other requisites at Pulo Obi, though a little way out of their direct course, because the prices charged at Singapore are very exorbitant, the old saying in the Straits being that "*no one can open his mouth at Singapore without paying a dollar!*"

It is generally believed in Siam that the river Menam is, *with the exception of the immediate neighbourhood of Yuthia*, a deep and navigable stream, and one on which a steamer could with great ease ply to and fro, provided coal depôts were established at stations along the river side. What mines may exist in the unexplored interior is yet a mystery, but there is no reason to suppose that so vast an extent of territory is utterly void of these riches of nature, and possibly in the more northern provinces coal strata may exist. If colliers, however, find it expedient and profitable to carry coals from Newcastle round the Cape of Good Hope to Aden, there is no reason why Siam should not hold out an equal inducement. When steam engines are there introduced, and steamers as well as steam mills, and eventually, I have little doubt, railways, are brought into operation, this navigation of the Menam would throw open a vast field to public enterprise. There is no reason to doubt that, yielding as the interior does such a vast supply of the sugar-cane, sugar factories and rum distilleries would quickly rise alongside the banks of the river. In the northern provinces the mulberry tree could be cultivated to advantage, and Siamese silk in a few years be brought to rival the produce of the China markets in Europe. Here European machinery and steam-power engines would form an essential article of the Siamese import trade from Great Britain. If tea is successfully cultivated in Assam, there is reason to hope that its introduction into Siam would be attended with a like happy result; and the coffee plant, which flourishes in all luxuriance on parts of the Malabar coast, might, at inland plantations, well irrigated by the Menam, arrive with care to great perfection. Indigo and cotton would be equally successful; and if the *gutta-percha*—that treasure-trove of the Straits—

remained hidden from the inquisitive inquiries of speculative merchants, naturalists, and travellers, through a long series of years, during which period the Straits may be said to have been in a comparative state of civilisation, and was at length revealed to the public through the medium of a young medical officer, we are justified in supposing that a country inhabited wholly by a benighted people may have many valuable productions which may hereafter yield to the force of minute and persevering investigation.

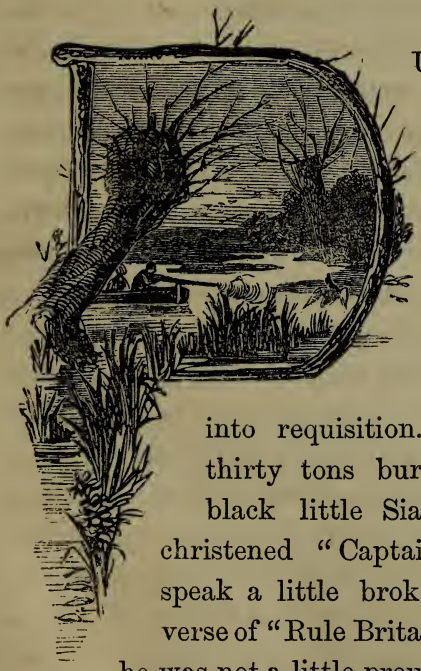
Few countries are richer than Siam as regards produce suited for and sought after in European markets, and few countries afford a wider field for the acquisition of wealth, as well as of useful and agreeable knowledge. The facilities now afforded to enterprise are very great, and it would be much to be lamented that any other European power should forestall us in seizing such an advantageous opportunity. The wild beasts of the forest would supply us with very many valuable skins and very valuable ivory ; the trees themselves yield a great variety of gums, and spices, and dyes ; the fields and banks of the river, rice, pepper, tobacco, sugar, spices, and eventually rum, tea, coffee, and a vast supply of silks, both raw and manufactured.



COFFEE PLANT

CHAPTER XII.

Shooting Excursion.—"The Friends'" Cutter.—Fishing for Pomphlets.—Landing at Pigeon Island.—Description of the Island.—Shooting Pigeons.—Government Dispatch Boxes.—Amusing adventure with one.—Fire at Bangkok.—Attack on Mr. Hunter's house.—Breaking out of the Cholera.—Author returns home.



URING my stay at Bangkok when there was nothing which demanded our presence on the spot, and this was not unfrequently the case, Mr. Hunter used to make up pleasant little parties of pleasure, on which occasions his beautiful little cutter, the "Friends," was put into requisition. The "Friends" was about thirty tons burthen, commanded by an ugly black little Siamese sailor that we commonly christened "Captain Jack." Captain Jack could speak a little broken English, and could sing one verse of "Rule Britannia," accomplishments of which he was not a little proud; and nothing was more insulting to his feelings than to address him in his own native dialect. His invariable reply to such an affront used to be, "Me speak more better Inglise as you speak Siamese," a fact which I am constrained to confess was truth itself; for, with the exception of Mr. H., very few of us could ever attain anything approaching to an efficient knowledge of that most barbarous tongue.

On one occasion when there was a perfect stagnation in trade, and politics were calmly reposing, a fishing and shooting excursion was planned. We were to start from Bangkok in the "Friends," and without any stoppages on the way, proceed direct to the mouth of the river, and sailing out into the bay, run alongside of the "John Panter," a fine English bark, lying at anchor off the bar, waiting a cargo of sugar which was expected from the interior. The "John Panter" was commanded by a very estimable young Welshman, Captain Harris, and it was to pick him up and take him with us that we were to call alongside. The morning we started from Bangkok was unpropitious in the extreme to our plans and expectations of amusement; it rained, blew, and thundered, but nothing could damp our ardour, and in the midst of this brewing squall, much to the disgust of Captain Jack, who had to bear all the brunt of the affair, we set sail, and sped rapidly down the river. The "Friends" had a very comfortable cabin, with eight commodious berths for passengers, a fine long table, and seats all round it, formed by the locker, inside of which the good things of this earth—the edibles and drinkables—were carefully stowed away. The cabin had small windows or portholes all round it, which made it nice and airy so long as we were in pretty smooth water; but when the sea was at all rough, then these portholes were hermetically closed, and the cabin was quite in the dark, till the little swinging globe was lit of an evening. It continued to blow and rain till past three o'clock in the afternoon, and then the "Friends," a regular little clipper for sailing, had made such progress, that we were in sight of the little floating fortress of Paknam. The sun now shone out brilliantly, and the evening was fresh and cool, and everything around looked so pleasant and smelt so sweet, that our spirits were quite enlivened by the prospects of a very delightful jaunt. Arriving alongside the "John Panter," it was put to the vote and unanimously carried that we do sup and sleep on board of the "John Panter" that night, and next morning, after imbibing certain coffees, proceed on our

expedition to Pigeon Island, one of a little group situated a few miles off the eastern shore of the gulf, or rather bay, and which was just discernible from the ship's deck. The "Friends" was anchored astern of the vessel, and a stout rope passed to her for better security should it come on to blow during the night. A very large quantity of guns and fishing tackle were now handed up and ranged in fierce array against the vessel's poop; and whilst some tried to catch fish for supper from the fish that were sporting alongside, others tried their hands at knocking over gulls on the wing. Thus the evening closed in, and about as many gulls were shot as fish were gulled, somewhere about half-a-dozen.

The next morning we started at about seven for Pigeon Island, and a very beautiful, bright morning it was. There was just a nice little land breeze sufficient to carry us rapidly through the water, and the sea was so smooth and calm, that we could see the sandy bottom distinctly, and amused ourselves by watching the shoals of little fish that kept sporting about in the sunlight. Those who fished, met with very great success, and more than one of those delicacies known in India as "*pomphlets*," was hooked up for our breakfast. There was no mistake about their being fresh, for not five minutes elapsed from the time when they were sporting merrily in the water, before they were dished up for breakfast. No qualms of conscience with regard to their untimely end, started up, like a nightmare, to take the keen edge off our appetites, and under the kindly shade spread over the deck by the mainsail, the good things set before us rapidly disappeared. As the day advanced, the heat increased, and we were ultimately obliged to seek refuge in the "Friends'" cabin. About one p. m. the cutter was brought-to off Pigeon Island, and *then* we found to our consternation that the water had ebbed so low, that there was no possibility of reaching the shore before the next high tide, which might, or might not be in six or twelve hours from that time. This was beyond all endurance, so we determined, *coûte qui coûte*, to get on shore if

we perished in the attempt. No sooner said than put into execution. So taking off our shoes and stockings, away we started on this very ludicrous expedition. One foot out of the vessel and into the mud ankle deep; immediately another foot out of the vessel, and the whole weight of the body brought to bear on the mud—knee-deep in a second. A violent effort to get the right foot disentangled, a dreadful struggle to do ditto with the left foot, and this kind of work continued for nearly twenty minutes. The moment we stopped for breath, we felt ourselves rapidly sinking, and would doubtless have sunk up to the neck, if we had halted long to repose ourselves; and all this time with a heavy double-barrelled "Manton" on one's shoulders. With a broiling sun overhead, against the rays of which straw hats were a poor protection, and a nasty, clammy mud reaching above one's knees, our condition was indeed ridiculously deplorable. But there was no help but to go a-head as rapidly as one could; and I found that by rapid movements of the legs I sank not half so deep in the clay as when I was creeping along at a snail's pace. Oh, that interminable, wretched half-hour of misery! The distance from the boat to the shore was about a hundred and fifty yards; and, this length of suffering completed, we reached the sandy beach, exhausted and faint, with feet and legs lacerated by sharp bits of shells and seaweed, and in the most filthy state of mud that the mind can picture. There, stretched at full length, under the shade of a blessed old tamarind tree, our party sought repose, whilst the villagers, like a family of good Samaritans, brought us chatties (jars) of water, which they threw over our feet, pouring water, and not ointment, into our wounds. This proceeding refreshed us a little; a glass of Hodgson's pale ale refreshed us a little more; and, in about half an hour's time, we were enabled to put on our stockings and shoes again, and venture into the village, where the head-man, who had known Mr. Hunter through a quarter of a century, received and lodged us with great hospitality during the week that we remained at Pigeon Island.

Pigeon Island is the Siamese name interpreted, but the name of the place in Siamese, I have entirely forgotten, for the reason that I never was able to pronounce it. It was a name of about twenty letters, with hardly a single consonant in it, something like Uioueuouauay—only not half so short. In a most delightful situation, full four miles distant from the nearest shore, this island had a reputation for being the healthiest spot in that part of the world. And the natives certainly gave ample proofs of their being in a state of perfect salubrity. Pigeon Island is only three miles in circumference ; but of these three miles, there is hardly a foot of ground that is not devoted to agricultural purposes. Flowers grew in perfect hedges—the China rose, the *maliapoo*, or red-stalk jessamine, the sweet-smelling cassia, and that most odoriferous of all odoriferous flowers, the bell passion-flower ; these mingled their sweetness with the freshly-mown hay, and made the early hours of morning feel like moments snatched from paradise, such as the depraved mind of man could conceive to have been the every-day enjoyment of Adam and Eve in their pristine innocence.

The dew was sparkling on the leaf,
Now tinged with golden light !
As all things fair are but too brief,
So these pure gems of night,
Like tears from some kind angel shed,
Fell glistening from above ;
They mourned the night too quickly fled,
As we mourn those we love.

But some, more happy in their doom,
Amongst the fair flowers fell ;
And midst their sweetness sought a tomb—
The rose and the blue-bell.
These fondly in their bosoms sought
To nurture them awhile,
But Life's with hidden dangers fraught,
Tho' Nature seems to smile.
A thoughtless child, in sportive play,
Plucked these fair flowers of morn;
And so their brightness passed away,
As passes early dawn.

And then to see the fruit trees bowed down with their rich offering—the cashoenut and apple, the callacca and the bilimby, the ramboteen and the sour-sop, the custard apple and the pomegranate, and lastly, that prince of all earthly fruits, the mangostein. This was a luxurious sight. All the gifts of Heaven seemed blended together in this little island. At least, so the birds seemed to say, for I am persuaded their hearts were grateful and happy, or they never could have sung so sweetly as they were all singing that morning. Even the old thief of a crow, who was perched on the palm-tree close by the side of the house, and who was yesterday convicted by our host of a felony, even he, noisy old rogue that he generally was, had got his head knowingly cocked on one side, evidently admiring the music of the other birds in silent attention, at the same time that his eyes were fixed upon our breakfast. Swarms of tiny little avrivats now arrive, and the confusion and noise they create put a stop to the other songsters. They are for all the world like so many imbecile old women who are labouring under the wretched hallucination that they once had a daughter, a very virtuous young woman, who behaved very ill in after life ; and her ingratitude is the theme of their conversation and dreams for the rest of their lives. These avrivats go over the same notes a hundred thousand times ; they must be repeating the same sentences over and over again ; and as they are so chatty upon this subject, depend upon it, it is scandal they are discussing. If they were not so very beautiful in plumage, I should be inclined to believe in transmigration, and look upon them as sorrowing, defunct old maids. There is a frightful screaming in the air, of very many parrots bound on a thieving expedition to rob some orchard. Noisy, little fierce-looking squirrels, with their tails cocked up in the air, and stolen property between their fore-paws, are alternately crunching a bit of some nut, and squealing defiance to one another. The melancholy, loving wooing of the turtle dove resounds from the distant little wood, and large flights of blue mountain pigeons

warn us that we must be up and doing, and so we leave our host to the enjoyment of his *otium cum dig.* in solitude, and saunter through the very picturesque little lanes of the village.

The houses are separated from each other, as they are connected with distinct little farms, to each of which is attached a fruit, vegetable, and flower garden. There is no taste displayed in the arrangement of these, but Nature is very bountiful, and there is a something extremely beautiful in the wild luxurious richness and profusion with which the plants grow. Very little nurturing do they require from the hand of man; the heavy dews of night moisten the earth, and add fresh vigour to the sap of the trees and plants, and the heat of the sun reaches them only through the protruding canopy of leaves. Poultry was abundant, especially ducks; and as for China pigs and pigglings, there were as many as would support a regiment of hungry soldiers for a month. Here also were milch cows and oxen, and bulls, and a few very unhappy looking sheep. The latter were quite a novelty to us again, for in Bangkok they are never to be seen, and the man that asked for milk to use with his tea or coffee would be immediately set down as perfectly insane. There was a fine spring of water that made quite a little stream before reaching the sea; and on either side of this stream were erected the wooden habitations of the inhabitants. We entered several of the houses and found them exceedingly neat and clean; the women were much prettier than the Siamese, and wore their hair in long tresses hanging over their backs and shoulders. They were principally Burmese by origin, who, having intermixed with Siamese, had become naturalised, although they still retained the costumes and customs of their native land. Emerging from the village we came out upon the paddy, or rice fields, and leaving these to our left we skirted a rich pasturage ground, and entered into the little forest that has been permitted by the natives to stand, as it affords shelter for the cattle and the labourer during the intense heat of the hottest part of the day.

An incredible number of parrots were perched on the banian trees, devouring the species of wild Indian fig that that tree produces; but it was utterly impossible to distinguish them from the green leaves of the trees. Our only chance was to station ourselves round the trees a few yards distant from them, and then one party gave a shout and threw a lot of pebbles amongst the leaves; this was the signal for a general scattering, and as crowds flew out in every direction we had excellent sport, firing in amongst them, and many a hard bite, that made us howl again with pain, did we get in our attempts to capture the wounded birds alive. They had such fearfully sharp beaks that unless we were very adroit in seizing them by the scruff of the neck, our fingers were sure to suffer; this was no easy job, for the parrots when they saw there was no chance of flight turned themselves upon their backs and defended themselves with their claws and beak, fighting with great bravery for their liberty; but we soon found out a method of circumventing them by thrusting the dead birds foremost, which they immediately clutched firmly, and then we dropped them both together into the recesses of a capacious game bag, that was carried by Captain Jack, and very proud and delighted the old fellow was at being permitted to accompany us on this shooting expedition. Towards evening large flights of pigeons, which had been feeding on the opposite coast, began to flock home to their nests and roosting places in the islands; we stationed ourselves at the extreme point of a narrow neck of land which ran out into the sea, and from this spot we picked the pigeons off as they passed overhead, and by nightfall Captain Jack had a pretty good burden to carry home. Some days we amused ourselves in fishing and paddling out a little distance to sea, to a snug little cove that lay on one side of the island, where we let our lines over and caught what we could. Prawns and crabs were abundant at this island, but I never, either here or at Bangkok, saw anything in the shape of an oyster, or even a lobster.

Thus about as pleasant a week as I had ever spent flitted

rapidly over our heads, and just as amusements began to get monotonous the time to which we had limited ourselves was up, and leaving Pigeon Island and its inhabitants to their accustomed quiet routine of life, and the birds to the undisturbed possession of their haunts—for both had been sadly interrupted by our most unexpected invasion—we set sail for Bangkok one Saturday evening, and arrived there early the following Monday morning.

Shortly after our return the "John Panter" was reported ready to sail for Singapore and Bombay. All were occupied in writing letters to be sent by this opportunity, and even his Siamese Majesty summoned his most learned scribes into his presence and made them concoct a despatch to his Excellency the Governor of Singapore (then the present Sir George Bonham), in which letter, after the usual most affectionate inquiries after health, &c., his Majesty communicated some secret political information relative to the declaration of war against Cochin China, and begged for information and advice. This long despatch was put into about a dozen highly scented envelopes, of different coloured satin, and then these were deposited at the bottom of a goodly-sized fine wicker basket—a basket about the size usually used for fruit—and then this basket, with the letters in it, was put into a large silk bag, highly decorated with flowers worked in silver and gold; the ribbons at the top were then drawn tight, securely closing the bag and both ends fastened together with sealing wax, and sealed with the large seal of state, thus preventing the possibility of any one getting an inkling of his Majesty's state secrets, save and except the Governor of Singapore, for whose confidential perusal they were intended. I had charge of this letter from Bangkok to the outside of the bar, and the "Friends" was kindly lent me by Mr. H. to take me to the "John Panter," and bring me back again, and a pretty mess I nearly made. Captain Jack was too valuable to Mr. H. to be spared at all times, and on the present occasion the "Friends" was entrusted to the charge of a man who did not exactly understand how to manage her.

Besides myself and the crew of the vessel, there was an unfortunate second mate of a Bombay ship that had lately arrived, and was at anchor outside the river. The poor man had been sent to collect some freight due to the vessel, and having completed his job was returning with a handkerchief full of Spanish dollars in either pocket of his great heavy pea-jacket; we had just crossed the bar, and were within half a mile of the shipping, when, seeing me bring up this extraordinary letter bag, he begged permission to look at it, and whilst he was inspecting it aft, near the man at the helm, I, by a lucky chance for myself, happened to go down into the cabin for something or other, when all of a sudden the "Friends" pitched completely on her beam-ends, and I heard the crash of something being carried away, which was instantly followed by a loud splash, and a cry of horror from the deck. On rushing up to see what was the matter, I found that the large main boom of the cutter had suddenly jibed, from the man at the helm having, by his bad steering, luffed her up, till she was caught right aback with a stiff sea-breeze blowing at the time, and the boom, in the force of its swing, had knocked the poor second mate overboard, in all probability breaking his ribs with the blow. Whether or not the poor fellow ever rose to the water's surface again—and the great weight of money in his pockets was all-sufficient to sink him like a stone—I never ascertained. We put the "Friends" about instantly, and hove her to, close where he had gone down, for the spot was indicated by an eddy in the water, and his straw hat floated close by. The accident had been seen from the ships, and boats were immediately despatched to our succour, but all in vain. A sea-gull that had been hovering over the spot alighted where the eddy had ceased to mark the poor young sailor's premature grave, and his hat was all that remained to remind us of him who had but so lately been our cheerful happy companion. I found the letter bag close to the tiller box, where, in all likelihood, the poor mate had thrown it to liberate his hands in his efforts to save himself from his sad fate.

Once during my prolonged sojourn at Bangkok I witnessed a fire on the river which threatened destruction to the whole city, and all the ships and other craft in harbour. A great deal of cocoa-nut oil is consumed by the Siamese for cooking and other purposes, and generally speaking each house is provided with one or more large-mouthed jars full of this ingredient for home consumption, consisting of inflammable matter. As the houses are constructed, it cannot be a matter of surprise that fire as easily catches as it is difficult to be extinguished. A careless party of boys who were fishing in the river by torch-light suffered the canoe to approach so near to some of the floating houses in one of those narrow little passages (which I have before alluded to as detrimental to the salubrity of the city, from the vast amount of filth there accumulated), that the torch ignited the thatched roof of one of the houses, which was instantly all in a blaze. Snatching away the torch from the delinquent's hand, who was wholly unaware of the mischief he had committed, another of the boys made an effort to fling it into the water, hoping that it would be instantly extinguished, and thus leave no clue to the discovery of the perpetrators of the deed; but in the struggle that ensued between the first boy, who imagined himself insulted, and the one who had snatched the torch away, the latter, in flinging it from his hand, missed his footing, and falling back into the water, sent the torch in an exactly opposite direction to what he had intended, and it, all blazing as it was, alighted on the roof of another house in the back row, and in less than two minutes a double row of streets was all in flames. The alarm of fire was instantly given by the Chinese junks in the harbour, who created a frightful din with their gongs, assisted in the noise by the bells of the European vessels. The watts in the neighbourhood caught up the strain, and eventually the great watt of the white elephant sounded its huge booming gong, which is somewhere about the size of a large round table. The city, which a few minutes before had been hushed in peaceful tranquillity, was now the scene of the

greatest confusion and noise imaginable. There was the murmuring of thousands of voices, that came stealing upon the ear like the roar of distant water; lights were instantly seen moving in every direction; vessels were weighing their anchors or slipping their cables, and sailing up the river in the Yuthia direction, so as to be out of reach of the fast-approaching flames. The fire was on the opposite side of the water to our house, and appeared to us at that time to be not far from the Portuguese consulate; but distant as it was, so bright were the flames, that the whole place was perfectly illuminated, and we could plainly distinguish the smallest boat moving on the river. All the Europeans on our side of the river were assembled at Mr. Hunter's wharf to witness this sad but grand spectacle, as also the American missionaries. One of these gentlemen, who was certainly never born to be a soldier, evinced the greatest symptoms of alarm and terror, though the fire was fully two miles away from us, and on the other side of the river; but he had fifty horrid conjectures to make—that some canoe, or boat, or vessel would come over all in flames, and ignite our side, and then his comfortable house and nice furniture would be all burnt. In the midst of these and many other lamentations of a very melancholy character, somebody chanced to ask him where Mrs. R. (his wife) and his children were. "Oh!" replied he, struck as it were all of a heap! "well, I guess I quite *forgat* them; I calculate they are asleep;" and with this exclamation he bolted into his house, and opening the bed-room door, roared out "*fire!*" with all his might, and then bolted back to the jetty (wharf) again, looking as pale as though he had expected to find the wharf burnt down, and all means of escape cut off. His poor wife and children, who had been frightened nearly out of their wits, came tearing down to the jetty in the utmost alarm, and when the lady found the real state of affairs, she rated poor R. most soundly for his cowardliness, and for putting her into such an awkward predicament as to compel her to run out in what she called her *she maizey* (chemise). The ladies of the

party and the greater number of Yankees, finding there was no immediate danger to be apprehended to their lives and properties, *calculated* that they would go to bed again, and accordingly went; but as for brother R., no earthly inducement could prevail on him to return to his house. It was a grand sight indeed to see the swarms of people that lined the floating houses on either side of the banks of the river for miles and miles; and when the King in his state barge came rowing down the river, as is his custom on any similar calamity, then in truth it was wonderful to see the prostrate thousands in attitudes similar to that of prayer, calling to the King to save them and their property from destruction,—as though his supposed celestial influence could arrest the fiery element in its direful progress. How seldom alas! do we see so much fervour and devotional faith in more enlightened but thoughtless professors of religion. The Mahometan will strictly follow up the ordinance of his creed; the idolator be scrupulous in his prayers and offerings to the idol of his choice; but the Christian, with all the good intentions of religion about him, is too apt to forget his Creator and best Benefactor.

Thus did this simple and foolish people firmly believe that the interposition of their King was all-sufficient to keep them from harm, and to make the effect more impressive, the fire was almost instantly quelled by some of the court agents having resorted to the simple plan of cutting away the moorings of that row of houses that lay nearest to the flames, and these floating down the river, and kept off by men in boats with long poles, gradually gained the centre of the stream, when, being caught by the strong current setting in that direction, they were rapidly swept round a corner, and so disappeared. As for the flames, they burnt on till the last bit of timber of the last house was fairly consumed; and then the gap occasioned by the water fairly quenched their mischievous ire, and all was dark night again. Even the Yankee was bold enough to venture back to bed; and as for myself, I lay thinking over the events of that

night. The distant cawing of crows warned me of the approach of day, and whilst meditating on the rash act of turning out again, I turned over on my side and so fell fast asleep.

The morning after the fire we were all rather late at the breakfast table, discussing the probable amount of damage that had been sustained. An old Chinese merchant assured us, that

INTERIOR OF A SIAMESE HOUSE.

beyond the loss of a few pots and pans, no great detriment had been sustained ; and certainly eight days had not elapsed before the burnt houses had been replaced by gaudily-painted new ones.

Shortly after the fire at Bangkok, we were subjected to a far more disagreeable nocturnal disturbance, which might have

terminated with loss of life and much bloodshed. Mr. Hunter happened to be absent from Bangkok on some mercantile business, and in his absence a vessel arrived from Liverpool, freighted with Manchester goods, and bringing us very many necessary additions to our household comforts, in the shape of wine, beer, hams, cheeses, &c. &c., and last, though not least, an acquisition to our small society in the shape of a young Englishman, a Mr. S., who had been in the West Indies, and had come to be manager of Mr. Hunter's house. The crew of this ship were about as great a collection of ruffians as could be assembled together, and the very first Sunday after their arrival they managed to smuggle on board a quantity of spirits, which one of them had very adroitly extracted from some of the newly landed barrels on shore. The natural result was, firstly, a great deal of hilarity; and secondly, a great deal of boxing, in which latter the master and captain came in for their share; finally, the last drop having been drained, the most intoxicated man of the lot brought a pannikin on shore and filled it again, deliberately in the presence of us all. Mr. H., the junior partner, upon this accosted the man, and got grossly insulted in return. The servants were then summoned, and the pilferer was by main force carried off to prison, and there locked up till he should be sober. The barrels were removed to a more secure spot, and the unconscious crew were eagerly waiting the return of their companion; at length losing all patience, they sallied forth in search of him, and great indeed was their indignation to discover that he was safely locked up in prison. They threatened to set fire to the house, and finding their menaces treated with contempt, they sallied forth in search of more ardent spirit, which they procured from the natives in large quantities, and when wound up to a perfect pitch of frenzy, they went on board and armed themselves with cutlasses and boarding pikes, determined at the cost of their lives to deliver their quondam friend from durance vile. It would seem that it was not the first time that such a rescue had been attempted at Mr. H.'s house in Bangkok. The junior

partner was quite an expert general, for, availing himself of the cruise the crew were having amongst the natives, he caused every grain of powder in the ship to be landed, and hid in his own warehouse, and, had time permitted, would have brought all arms away. It was a most unpleasant position to be in; obliged to defend one's life and property against a large body of drunken ruffians, who, at the best moments, were a plotting and murderous set; and again on the other hand, incurring the risk of imbuing one's hands with human blood, and the unpleasant results and reflections consequent thereon. Mr. H.'s house had a high wall in front, with a strong gateway at either end; these were duly closed and barred at sunset, and nothing but a sailor or a monkey could ever climb over them. Darkness set in, and the junior partner summoning all his servants, told them to light a large wood fire under the wall on the inside of the garden, the house being kept in utter darkness, so that though we could distinctly discern all movements outside, the sailors could see nothing of us, and we thus escaped being exposed to a shower of stones or missiles. About eight at night we were regularly besieged by these intoxicated and infuriated seamen. H. warned them that the first man that climbed over the wall should be shot. Little regarding this threat, which they laughed at and derided, they with one wild shout made for the wall, and one man, unluckily for himself, more active than the rest, actually scaled it, and was in the act of dropping into the garden, when young H. presented his fowling-piece at him, and taking deliberate aim, fired. The guns were loaded with shot, but this was a secret known only to ourselves. The loud report of the fowling-piece was followed by the sound of something heavy falling to the ground, and immediately the cry of "I'm shot," with heavy groans, filled the air. The crew, who were as dastardly as they were vicious, immediately retreated to the ship, leaving their fallen comrade to get away as he best could. The man, however, smarting from what he naturally imagined to be a death-

wound in the chest, never attempted to stir, and Mr. H.'s servants carried him into one of the magazines, where he was placed on a bed, and in the interval I was despatched to fetch the doctor. This was no easy job, as I had to climb over the roofs of houses, so as to avoid coming into contact with any of the sailors, and the doctor had, at the risk of bruising his shins, to come back with me by the same agreeable mode of travelling. The wounds proved trivial, and only skin deep; and next morning Mr. Hunter, on his return to Bangkok, had all the ringleaders arrested, and sent them down in chains, on board a Siamese man-of-war, to Singapore, there to vindicate their conduct as they best could before Sir George Bonham, then governor of the Straits. The Prince Chou Faa, having heard of our situation, very kindly came to our rescue, but when he arrived everything was at an end—the riot quelled—the piratical crew fast asleep, and the wounded prisoner safely locked up for the night.

This was the last adventure I had at Siam. Soon after, the cholera again brought desolation with it, and having had a slight attack I thought it safest—and this was also the doctor's opinion—to decamp, which I did in the greatest hurry, leaving my friends and employment behind, and proceeding to Singapore as a passenger in the Bombay brig "Kusrovie." Thence, I visited Penang once again, and finally, arriving at Madras on the 2nd January, 1842, I quitted that Presidency and India on the 7th of February in the same year, happy to think that I, amongst the thousands in the East, had been spared to revisit my native land again.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF SIAM.

OF the History of Siam previous to the visit of the French Embassy, in the seventeenth century, it is scarcely possible to obtain any accurate particulars. The Siamese themselves pretend that their records go as far back as the year 1300 of our era, at which time a king reigned, bearing the very hard and heavy name of Pra-Poat-houne Sourritep-pennaratui Louanne Bopitrà. Of him and his successors, for three hundred years, exceedingly little is known. The principal object which these various monarchs seem to have pursued, or, at all events, that to which their historians appear to have attached the most importance, was to build new capital cities, and transport the people *en masse* from the old towns to the new. What historical or other facts may be concealed under this statement, it is somewhat difficult to conjecture. Despotic as these kings of Siam always appear to have been, it is extremely improbable that they would be always desiring to change the seat of government out of mere caprice, nor could they exercise their power so effectually as entirely to depopulate the old towns. The king and his people must both have wished for these removals, and it is highly probable that the real history of that period would

disclose to us interesting, though they might be painful, pictures of loss of life, by floods in the Menam, by ravaging pestilences, and, most probably, by both foreign and civil wars. The city of Yuthia was built and made the capital by King Rhamatitondi, in the year 1594, and it remained the capital of the kingdom down to the close of the last century. During the period between 1300 and 1594, it is said that twenty-six kings reigned, which would be on an average about eleven years to each reign, but what these kings did, whether they succeeded each other quietly, whether they died natural or violent deaths, are circumstances which we of Europe will never in all probability know, or gain even an idea of, unless we choose to pin our faith to such veracious men as Mendez Pinto.

The first clear point that shows itself in their history is in the year 1568, when the country was invaded and made tributary by a Burmese king, named Mandanagri. This monarch seems to have been a great warrior, for he extended his dominions as far as the confines of China, and appears to have lived a Napoleon sort of life. The Siamese say that the invading army which accompanied him consisted of a million and a half of men, and that so bravely was the capital city defended against this mighty host, that it was only through the treachery of one of the inhabitants that the place was taken. The real truth would most probably give a very different estimate of the numbers of this army, and the mode in which Yuthia capitulated. It is worthy of notice that in this army were found two thousand Portuguese soldiers, well disciplined and accustomed to war, commanded by "the brave Don Diego Suanes." These troops, like the celebrated Scotch Legion that served under Gustavus Adolphus during the thirty years' war, were hired mercenaries, who doubtless contributed much to the success of the Burmese arms, but who, in all probability, would have fought as soon on the Siamese side if they had been offered higher pay. This is not the only instance where we meet Portuguese soldiers serving in the armies of the East in this manner. Don Diego Suanes seems to

have been a brave man, and to have been consulted in all important matters, military matters at least, by the Burmese king. To grace his triumphal march home, Mandanagri carried away with him the Queen of Siam and her two sons, probably desirous to have some hostages for the due payment of the tribute under which Siam had been laid. The two princes, were, however, permitted to return a few years afterwards, and in 1583 their captor died. His successor was obliged to dispute the possession of the throne with an uncle, and the King of Siam seized the opportunity to declare himself independent. The immediate consequence of this was another invasion of Siam, in which the invaders were completely overthrown, and two hundred thousand of them said to have been killed. A more formidable army was, however, sent under the command of the Burmese king's eldest son. One of the princes who had been led into captivity was now King of Siam. He was, when young, known by the name of the "Black Prince," and appears to have been as brave, daring, and successful as the English Edward who bears the same title, for, undismayed by the numbers and power of his opponents, he attacked the enemy, routed them in a pitched battle, and slew the leader with his own hands. Nay, he went so far as to invade his opponent's territory, and laid siege to the capital of Pegu ; but he was obliged to retire to Siam, with considerable loss.

This prince died in 1605, and his brother, surnamed the White King, succeeded him. He was very unlike his brother ; and during his reign, which lasted five years, the country seems to have been at peace. His second son succeeded him, but not without an attempt being made by one of the nobles, (whose conspiracy was discovered and he himself executed,) to usurp the sovereignty. This nobleman held a high position in the country, and by some means had obtained possession of two hundred and eighty natives of Japan, who served him as slaves. These men, after their master had been put to death, ran in a body to the palace, surprised the King, and compelled him to deliver up four of the principal nobles who they supposed were concerned

in their master's death. These nobles were immediately murdered, and the King was compelled to sign with his own blood such conditions as the Japanese proposed. They then committed great abuses, seized on much treasure, and departed from the country.

About ten years after this, the Siamese sent ambassadors to Goa, the principal station of the Portuguese in the East Indies. This appears to have been in consequence of some embassy previously sent to Siam; and the chief point to be noticed regarding it was, an offer to the Portuguese of a port on the Siamese coast, where they might establish themselves and build a fort. The ambassadors were splendidly entertained, and a Dominican friar sent to accompany them back with costly presents. This friar found the King much more liberal in his ideas than subsequent ambassadors have found any other Siamese King. He agreed to allow the Portuguese merchants to resort to his ports, and be exempt from all duties. Another embassy was sent to Goa in 1621, requesting the Portuguese to send some holy fathers to preach the gospel in the kingdom of Siam. The request was complied with; and it is said the King built a church at his own expense, in which Christianity was preached by some Franciscans. This King, however, fell a victim to a very curious conspiracy. From four to five hundred Japanese were brought into the country by the conspirator, who was one of the most influential noblemen of the country, and so well and successfully did he use them that he speedily dethroned the monarch, and reigned in his stead. The Japanese soon became a kind of Pretorian guard, or Janissaries; and their power increased to such an extent that the usurper felt very uneasy, and his son had to disband them altogether. This is another of those incidental circumstances that are constantly arising out of some dark history like the present, for which in vain we seek for an explanation that, if procured, would be of the utmost interest. Were these men really natives of Japan? Were they taken from their own country by force, or did they go

willingly? What state was Japan in at the time? Were they honest men, or were they the refuse and scum of society, to whom the lines of the poet might be applied—

> "True patriots they, for be it understood,
> They left their country for their country's good."

Japan is and has long been such a sealed book to the nations of Europe, and its inhabitants have so long been regarded somewhat as people who live on the world but do not belong to it, that one is rather surprised to find them here, for the second time, playing so prominent a part in Siamese history.

However, the Japanese disappear from the scene, and we are left to grope in the dark for some years; until suddenly, like passengers emerging from a railway tunnel into the light of a sunny day, we find, in the year 1657, a king reigning under the title of Chau Naraya, during whose reign occurred many of the events most interesting to us as Europeans, and who, from all accounts, was a *man* worthy of esteem and respect, and a *king* deserving praise for justice, wisdom and humanity. He came to the throne when Siam was in a most unsettled state; and scarcely had he commenced to reign, when revolts broke out in many parts of the country. All these he quelled with promptness and decision, and with little bloodshed. The priests, with whom his liberal ideas made him no favourite, entered into a conspiracy against him, and a plot was laid to assassinate the monarch while he was attending some religious rite in one of the temples. This plot was discovered, and the priests were killed instead of the King. This monarch is said to have had a nice vein of pleasantry, and to have enjoyed a practical joke amazingly. One instance of this kind is recorded. A certain high religious functionary, presuming, as men of his class are never slow to do, on the privileges of his office, made some remarks to the King, one day, in a very insolent manner. His Majesty listened in silence, with right royal dignity; and as soon as the conference was ended, he gave orders that a large

baboon, an animal full of mischievous tricks, should be sent, as a present from the King, to this insolent church official, with a polite request that the priest should keep the creature, treat it well, and allow it perfect freedom of action. The poor priest had no alternative but to obey. The animal had not been many days in his house, when everything was thrown into ruin and confusion; and the priest went to the King, imploring him to receive back the present. His Majesty very pleasantly said, he was surprised at the request, and thought the priest must have very little patience when he could not endure the bad conduct of a poor animal for a few days, while he, the King, had to endure the bad conduct and the insolent treatment of thousands of his subjects every day in his life.

It was during the reign of this King that that most extraordinary attempt was made by Louis XIV., of France, to convert him to Christianity, as well as to conquer his country. The entire transaction, and the persons who appear in it, are tinged with so much romance, that, but for the undoubted authenticity of the story, it would be difficult to believe it. In the first place, we have Louis XIV., one of the greatest and at the same time most licentious monarchs of France, who, living in an atmosphere more redolent of scepticism and more opposed to Christianity than at that time surrounded any European court, was yet filled with the greatest desire to be the means of converting to Christianity the princes of the East. In the second place, we have that subtle, powerful, unconquerable body of daring priests, the Jesuits, then in the full ardour of their missionary schemes; schemes ostensibly for the purpose of spreading the gospel, but virtually for bringing mankind under their absolute sway: a society with the most slender means doing the most daring and difficult deeds; now sailing down some great unexplored river in America, and then teaching European arts to races of whose existence Europe had no knowledge; one year heard of as traversing the icy mountains and snowy plains of Siberia, and the next seen preaching the gospel

under a burning equatorial sun. Our earliest European accounts of many of the nations of both the Eastern and Western worlds are derived from their books ; and in few places where European civilisation has taken root, have traces of the Jesuits not been found, though in many cases they are remembered with other feelings than those of gratitude or good-will. In the third place, we have a Siamese monarch of consummate ability—more European, perhaps, than Asiatic in his ideas—willing to cultivate the friendship of civilised foreigners, and anxious to induce them to settle in his kingdom. Fourthly, and lastly, we find a Greek adventurer from Cephalonia acting as prime minister to this King, and conducting his affairs with an ability and a success that would be deserving of the highest admiration, if they did not often display an utter disregard of principle and of truth. The history of this man is worth knowing, both from its romantic character, and from the influence that he exercised in Siam, and over the destinies of the Jesuit mission sent by Louis XIV.

Constantine Phaulkon, for so was the Siamese premier named, was the son of respectable people in the island of Cephalonia, where he was born, in the year 1630. At an early age he gave indications of his taste for a roving, vagabondish sort of life, and, when twelve years old, he left "his father's halls," to make a voyage to England, in a merchant-vessel. His friends were doubtless sorry to part with the little boy, before whom such an uncertain future seemed to lie. Little did they dream that young Constantine would ultimately become prime minister to an Asiatic king of whom they had never heard, and director of the affairs of a kingdom whose geography was utterly unknown to the inhabitants of the Ionian Islands. Constantine arrived safe in England, and as he was a prompt, quick, intelligent lad, who walked about with his eyes always open and ever fixed on the main chance, he soon obtained some commercial employment. While in England he became a Protestant, whether from conviction or convenience does not appear, but most likely from the

latter, as in after years he again became a Catholic. However, one thing led to another; the young Greek prospered in the world, embarked in trade on his own account, and having made a little money, he bought a ship, freighted her with goods, and as was often the practice with owners in those days, he embarked on board his ship, and sailed to the East, on trading purposes bent. How he doubled the Cape, what ports he touched at, and what were his ultimate views, are events that have gone, like many others, without their record; and the only clear fact that can be picked up about his voyage is, that his ship was wrecked at the mouth of the Menam, on the Siamese coast. The loss was great, but Constantine Phaulkon was saved. *That* was a great fact. He appears to have staid some time in the country, for the next time he is met with, he is able to speak the Siamese language, an accomplishment that in those days could only be acquired *in* Siam. We next find Constantine again wrecked, but this time on the coast of Malabar, in India. There, however, he found companions in misfortune, and among them was, strange to say, a Siamese official, who had been wrecked on the same coast on his return home from some embassy. What appeared a sad misfortune to Phaulkon, actually became to him the reverse. The Greek spoke Siamese well, and having saved a good deal from the wreck of his ship, he was able to carry the Siamese ambassador back to his own court. Phaulkon was received with great favour and honour, and was speedily elevated to the highest office in the state, next the King, an office which the French missionaries found him duly filling.

In these circumstances, so unique and so favourable, the plans of the Jesuits, for the conversion to Christianity of all Eastern Asia, were first put in force. The country was divided at the Vatican, and bishops appointed with authority over the various districts. The natives of China, Cambogia, and Siam were profoundly ignorant of the good intentions of the Pope, nor would it have tended much to remove that ignorance, if they had

been told that Francis Pallu, M. de la Motte Lambert, and Ignatius. Cotolendy were coming to their respective territories, with the titles of Bishops of Heliopolis, Berytus, and Metellopolis. These three bishops were Frenchmen, as Louis XIV. wished that the honour and glory of the enterprise should be associated with France and his own name. In the year 1660 these priests arrived in Siam. They were exceedingly well received, and great favour was shown to them by the King, who gave them a piece of land on which to build a church. But all their efforts to convert the monarch failed. He listened patiently to all they had to say, did not dispute any points with them, but usually wound up the conference by the quiet remark that, "the Christian religion was good, but his religion was just as good." The Jesuits, however, soon mastered the language and opened schools, three of which they had in successful operation at one time. For about twenty years the Jesuits laboured hard in their vocation, and introduced many of the arts of Europe into the country. The King became so pleased with them, and the country from whence they had come, that he sent an embassy to the court of Louis XIV., who was highly flattered by such an attention, and immediately sent a return embassy with splendid presents. Two years afterwards he sent another, with more priests, and 500 soldiers, and this time there appears to have been some intention of conquering the country.

The second embassy, sent by Louis XIV. to Siam, was headed by the Chevalier de Chaumont and Father Tachard, and embraced five vessels—Le Gaillard, 52 guns; L'Oiseau, 46; La Loire, 24; La Normandie and Le Dromadaire. It left the port of Brest on the 1st of March, 1687, at seven o'clock in the morning (the old Jesuit chronicler liked to be rather particular in some things), and the ships, after a tedious voyage round the Cape of Good Hope, cast anchor in the Menam on the 27th day of September, having thus occupied on the voyage above six months. The Siamese Ambassadors, who returned in these ships, as soon as the anchor was dropped demanded to be

put on shore in order that they might, without the slightest delay, render their accounts to the King, as, according to Siamese etiquette, it was necessary that they should have an audience with the King before they were even permitted to enter their own houses. The first officer of their own country they met asked them of course about the objects they had seen, and they stated, with truly oriental exaggeration, that they had seen angels not men, and that France was not a kingdom, but a world. They described in the most pompous and poetical language the grandeur, the riches, the politeness of the French people, and tears flowed down their cheeks when they spoke of the manner in which they had been received, and of the civilities that had been profusely bestowed upon them by the great monarch who then ruled France. When they went to make their reports to the King, his Majesty, in the true Eastern style of taking matters, coolly and calmly, ordered the senior ambassador to attend him every day at a certain hour, and then deliver his report in the form of consecutive lectures. In this easy manner —easy for the lecturer—easy for the audience—and quite in the fashion of "the thousand and one nights," did the King of Siam receive his Ambassador's reports respecting a great country and a mighty nation, that were at the time leading the civilisation of the world.

When the ambassadors arrived, the King was engaged in hunting, but he left his sport specially for the purpose of receiving the Frenchmen. The game he was in pursuit of was the elephant, an amusement in which his successors do not appear to have extravagantly indulged. The woods that formed his hunting grounds contained elephants twelve and thirteen feet in height, few of them being under ten feet, and all, according to the Reverend Father Tachard, who describes them with uncommon piquancy, the most furious of beasts when enraged, and the most dangerous to hunt. Besides them, there were the rhinoceros, an animal said to be less dangerous than the elephant and the tiger, of enormous size, but more easily killed than either of the

others. The first interview with the King was a mere formal business, attended with the usual ceremonies, and at which the chief feature was a grand, eloquent speech, made in French, and translated to the King. The Jesuits who accompanied the mission had shortly after an interview with the King, and their spokesman, this same Father Tachard, told his Majesty that they, the Jesuits, had suffered much pain, and endured much grief, in leaving the King of France, their friends, and their dear country; but that this pain and grief had been sweetened by the hope that in Siam they would find the great King of the East—that they would find friends, and receive the royal protection. The benefits which his Siamese Majesty had already conferred on them, day by day, since their arrival, had made them forget all the fatigues of their long and painful voyage, and that they now wished, as their dearest desire, to employ the rest of their lives in understanding the language of the country—in communicating to the Siamese people a knowledge of the arts and sciences of Europe, and, above all, a knowledge of the true God. This speech was accompanied with presents of astronomical instruments, which were graciously received by the King, and the use of which he requested the Jesuits to explain. He said to them, however, very judiciously, that perhaps they would not find success in the principal object of their mission so easy as they hoped, but that patience always, in time, conquered even the greatest obstacles. This audience lasted two hours, and would have been still further prolonged had not the King been obliged to cut it short in consequence of his then suffering from an attack of rheumatism.

Things went on for some time very pleasantly for the French. They were treated with great respect and distinction by the King, and were appointed to important offices under him. They, in general, seemed to like the new country, in which they had been so well received, but, after a time, they began to show symptoms of an insolent and a haughty spirit that ultimately led to their ruin. There was, however, one exception in the

person of the Count de Forbin, a blunt, straightforward, honest sailor, who would not be hood-winked by the clever Phaulkon, and who saw clearly enough to what issue affairs were tending. He accepted, with great reluctance, the office of "Admiral and Generalissimo of the Forces of Siam;" and, though the King showed great regard for him, the candid sailor could never dissimulate his real feelings of melancholy and uneasiness. One day, the King happened to rally him on his conduct, and inquired the reason of his apparent unhappiness. The sailor answered, that "he esteemed himself very happy to be in the King's service;" but he ground his teeth at the same time, clearly intimating that his reply was a mere piece of etiquette to which he was obliged to conform. This conduct gave, as might be supposed, great offence to the King, and, as a matter of course, to the King's courtiers.

Meanwhile, the intriguing and wily Greek, Constantine Phaulkon, was making all parties instruments in carrying out his own deep designs. He kept the King diverted and in good humour with the displays which the *savans*, who accompanied the embassy, could so well make of European science and learning, and with hopeful visions of the greatness to which the empire would rise by the introduction of European arts. He fed the Jesuits by constant hopes of success in their great object of converting the King to Christianity; and he satisfied the laymen of the expedition by places and emoluments, and prospects of riches, from the great wealth, as he represented it, of the kingdom of Siam.

But the aspect of affairs soon changed. Chaumont returned to France, where he arrived in 1688, just at the time of the English revolution of that year, and leaving behind him in Siam the elements of a revolution more sanguinary, and as important in its results to Siam as that of 1688 was to England. Phaulkon found the King determined not to embrace Christianity, and as he could no longer conceal this fact from the Jesuits, he was obliged to communicate it to them in a letter ostensibly

from the King, but evidently the composition of Phaulkon himself. This letter was couched in such terms as to cause the confidence of the Jesuits in the prime minister to be greatly shaken. But a more serious cause of apprehension soon appeared in the growing enmity of the nobles and the people generally. The haughtiness and insolence of the French had gone on increasing until the nobles became alarmed for their own influence. They saw a body of strangers, superior to themselves in all kinds of knowledge, but more especially superior in the art of war, holding high offices in the State, and enjoying the confidence of the King. They felt not only that their own power was weakened, but that these strangers, in all probability, if allowed to go on unchecked, would ultimately become masters of the kingdom. But the time for open action had not arrived, and so they were content to "bide their time."

The first open symptom of discontent came from Johore. Johore is the name of a small state at the extreme point of the Malay peninsula, and at this time its King was tributary to Siam. In all probability, the King neither knew nor cared anything about the French adventurers and their doings in Siam. His interest in the matter merely resolved itself into the problem of how he could escape paying his yearly tribute. But there were foreign influences at work on the King of Johore. The Dutch had, from the very first, watched with great jealousy the proceedings of the French; and, having settlements near the Johore territory, they persuaded the King to send envoys to the King of Siam, offering the services of his troops to exterminate the strangers from the land. But this offer was rejected with indignation; and it was with great difficulty his Majesty of Siam could be prevented from causing the heads of the envoys to be cut off, contrary to all usage either in civilised or barbarous lands.

Soon after this, an event, known in Siamese history as "the revolt of the Macassars," occurred, which hastened the revolution, of which the French had sown the seeds. The

story connected with this revolt gives us another curious, but unsatisfactory, glimpse into the otherwise dark history of many of these eastern lands. Celebes, a large island of a most curious, irregular shape, situated to the east of Borneo, contains a district known by the name of Macassar. The King of Macassar had been dethroned by the Dutch, for some reason which does not appear, but most probably because it happened at the time to suit their own purposes. The sons of the dethroned monarch sought and obtained a refuge in Siam, which, at the time, was quite an asylum for foreigners in distress, seeing that it likewise had welcomed three princes of Champa, a neighbouring state. These refugees brought with them many foreigners in their train; and, instead of reciprocating the benefits that the King showered on them, they entered into a conspiracy to dethrone him; to proclaim a younger brother, a mere boy, as his successor; and, under his "phantom crown," to rule the kingdom of Siam. *They* also had religious objects in view, for they were led by a Mahometan priest, and intended, as soon as they were strong enough, to offer the inhabitants the usual alternative —death or the Koran. But their conspiracy was fortunately discovered. The French were called in to put it down, and, after some severe fighting, (for the historians of the day say that the Macassars fought with ferocious bravery,) it *was* put down.

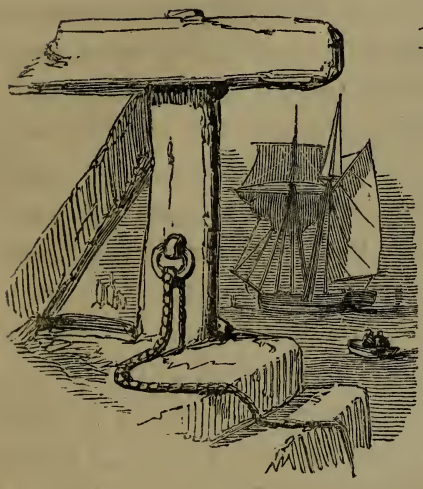
The nobles, however, were soon in a position to unmask their designs; and after a series of intrigues and skirmishes, they succeeded in driving the French from the country, the King was dethroned, and Constantine Phaulkon suffered a most ignominious and cruel death. A new dynasty ascended the throne, and possessed it for about eighty years. During that time Siam appears to have had little intercourse of any kind with foreign nations. The country was, however, greatly torn by civil wars, which weakened it to such an extent that the Burmese, thinking it would fall an easy prey, invaded Siam, advanced as far as Yuthia, and would most probably have succeeded in subduing

the whole country, had not their King, who was leading the army in person, died.

In 1765, another Burmese invasion took place, which was successful. Yuthia was taken, the King killed, and the princes and princesses carried into captivity. The Siamese, however, rose as soon as the Burmese general left, and, headed by a chief of Chinese descent (who proclaimed himself King), again established the independence of their country. This King removed the capital to Bangkok; but though the early years of his reign were marked by justice and wisdom, the latter were characterised by frightful acts of cruelty. A rebellion took place, led by one of the generals, in which the King was dethroned and killed, and the successful general reigned in his stead. Another Burmese invasion took place in 1786, but this time it was unsuccessful; and since that time the Siamese have been engaged in no foreign war of any consequence.

TOBACCO PLANT.

RECENT EMBASSIES TO SIAM.



THE Portuguese, it would appear, were the first European people that had intercourse with the Siamese. An enterprising nation, without many rivals, who had discovered the way to India by the Cape of Good Hope, was not likely to rest contented with one or two settlements on barren islands, when the whole wealth of the oldest part of the old world seemed opened up to them. Their settlements were admirably chosen, whether on the isle of Ormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, or on Goa off the coast of Malabar. Their trade extended to all the islands in the Eastern seas, and their power and fame were undoubtedly very great among all the nations of the East; for, as we saw in the previous chapter, their friendship and alliance were courted by the Siamese kings, and valuable trading privileges offered to them. The Dutch also had, from an early period, considerable intercourse with the Siamese; but the proceedings of the French appear to have, and very naturally, alarmed the Siamese, and given rise to that jealous feeling against, and dread of, Europeans, that form the greatest obstacles to commercial intercourse with them. In the early history of the European power in the East, the native inhabitants appear not

as hostile and jealous, but rather as friendly and unsuspecting; anxious to give the strangers, in whom they acknowledged many points of superiority, a friendly welcome, and to turn those points to mutual advantage. But a closer acquaintance with the European character led to a change of this policy. The Asiatic soon saw in his pale-faced brother of Europe a soldier as well as a trader; an ambitious diplomatist as well as a clever merchant. That power, derived from force of character and strength of mind, which the men of the East saw in the men of the West, became a suspicious quality to be guarded against. The inferior race felt its inferiority, but its Asiatic pride ordered it not to succumb. Nor did the actions of the Europeans in any way tend to diminish this feeling. The usual acts of their power were three: first, they got a factory; second, a fort; and third, they became the ruling power. In India, and all along the eastern islands, this epitome of their history was illustrated by example crowding after example, which had a striking effect on those princes who were yet in a position to reject an alliance that seemed, through the influence of some infallible and irresistible fate, to lead to national degradation. In Siam, and the more eastern countries, this idea was fostered by the numbers of Chinese merchants who had found a home, and who were living handsomely on the fruits of that commerce which the Europeans desired to share, if not to monopolise. But these Chinese emigrants were in a very different position from that which would be occupied by a body of emigrants from Europe. The laws of China prohibit emigration. When a Chinaman leaves his country, he ceases to have any claim on his government; and when he settles in a foreign land, it is usually, not to get rich as fast as he can and then go home, but to live and die; to marry a wife of his adopted nation; and to become, to all intents and purposes, one of that nation himself. But with Europeans the case was different. The emigrants never forgot their country, and their country never forgot them. The Chinese might be injured, robbed, and

murdered, and the Chinese Government would not interfere; but injury to a European subject was welcomed by his country as an excuse for a demand for redress, if not a declaration of war.

If, therefore, we find these eastern nations hard to deal with now; if we find them jealous, cunning, and deceitful, and disposed to look with suspicion on even our most sincere offers, let us always remember the lessons they have received, the examples to which they can point, and the long bill of indictment they can run up against every nation of Europe that has attempted, by force, fraud, or fair dealing, to make settlements in the East. Even in our own day such examples have not altogether ceased; and any acute Chinaman might overset the entire object of a mission to Siam by repeating and applying, *mutatis mutandis*, the expression of a worthy member of the House of Commons, that "the English had been appointed by Divine Providence to be the rulers of India." Whether this right be claimed by the English people or the English Crown, the Chinaman would not have much difficulty in showing by examples that it was a "right divine to govern wrong."

In 1821 a British embassy was sent to Siam under the care of John Crawfurd, Esq., by the Governor-General of India, then the Marquis of Hastings. The embassy was intended likewise for the King of Cochin-China, whose dominions border those of the King of Siam. The instructions given to Mr. Crawfurd were both judicious and minute, but it unfortunately happened that, in addition to the ordinary difficulties of dealing with a proud, jealous king, and cunning, deceitful courtiers and subordinates, his task was rendered doubly difficult and complex, by embracing subjects both of a commercial and political nature, the latter involving at the same time the authority of the King of Siam over a tributary subject, and the character of Britain for hospitality.

This political question hampered and embarrassed the whole negotiation. It might be doubtful whether a favourable result

would have been obtained had this question not existed, but most certainly, so long as this question remained unsettled, a successful result was not to be hoped for. The affair in itself was paltry enough. The Kings of Queda and Pera, two petty states in the peninsula of Malacca, that are little other than a narrow strip of sea coast, scarcely extending, when put together, through three degrees of latitude, had in some way or other embroiled themselves with the King of Siam, to whom they were tributary, and had sought the protection of the Governor of Prince of Wales' Island. The English Governor tried to mediate in the dispute, but the only conditions to which the Siamese King would listen were, that the two tributary monarchs should make their appearance at Bangkok, and be dealt with according to their offences. This was a course which these miserable creatures, with the title of king, had too great a regard for their own precious persons to pursue ; and, accordingly, the Siamese King was still more incensed.

Mr. Crawfurd had repeated interviews, conducted with great regard to Siamese etiquette, before the real business of the embassy could be entered on. The first of these was with the Governor of Paknam, who invited the members of the embassy to an excellent repast. At this banquet, one person was present whose company had not been calculated on. About the period of Mr. Crawfurd's leaving Calcutta, or about five months before the day on which they were then dining, the Governor of Paknam, brother of their present host, had departed this life, and his body, "lying in a coffin, covered with tinsel and white cloth, and a profusion of aromatics," was placed behind a curtain in this dining-room, waiting for such burial as it is customary for the Siamese to give their dead. The host did not, however, wish, like the ancient Egyptians, to point a moral and remind his guests that "they were dust, and unto dust they must return," but the body was there to fulfil a certain number of days of lying in state, and the Englishmen would have been ignorant of its presence, if they had not, like all other curious observers, wanted

to know what there was "behind the scenes." After this banquet was finished, a perfect battery of questions, many of them most impertinent, if not offensive, was opened on Mr. Crawfurd by the Governor, the aim being to ascertain the real object of the mission, and to get a knowledge of the presents that had been brought to the king from the Governor-General of India. About these presents, a most avaricious spirit was displayed; a list of them was demanded, and this was compared with the presents sent on shore, and disputes constantly arose about alleged discrepancies between the list and the articles.

The second interview was with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, whose questions were similar to those of the Governor of Paknam, but less rude and impertinent. Then followed an interview with the Crown Prince, in which a whole host of questions were put and answered. The fourth interview was to be with the king himself, and the 8th of April, 1822, was fixed as the eventful day. Mr. Crawfurd had thus been fifteen days in the country before he was permitted to see the king. The interview was attended with ceremonies similar to those described in the preceding pages: questions were put and answers given, and it ended in the abrupt manner usual with Siamese kings.

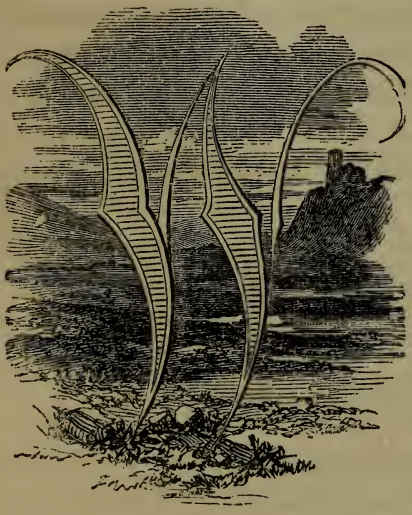
It was eight days after this interview with the king, ere any attempt was made on the part of the Siamese to give Mr. Crawfurd an opportunity of entering on the real business of the mission. The first interview resulted in nothing. The Siamese Minister was told that the English "wished the imposts upon European commerce at Siam lightened, and the intercourse rendered in all respects so free and fair as to make it agreeable to both parties." This was immediately met by the demand that not less than four ships should come yearly to Siam; the reason assigned for this being that two years previously a commercial treaty had been made with the Portuguese, in which the import duties were reduced from eight to six per cent.; but no Portuguese ships had since that time come to Siam. Six days afterwards, a second interview took place, which lasted from

nine to twelve o'clock at night, and which turned chiefly on the security for the persons and properties of British subjects resorting to Siam, a security which the Siamese were unwilling to guarantee, saying, very truly, that British subjects in Siam must submit to the laws of the country. Twelve days after this intimation came that the negotiation must be further postponed in consequence of all the great officers of state being engaged in arrangements for removing the king's residence from one part of the palace to another! His Majesty having been safely removed, a third interview was held with his chief minister. The chief point insisted on by the Minister at this interview was the king's right, through his agents, to select such goods from trading vessels as he thought proper, and offering for them his own prices. Should the captain refuse to sell at those prices, none of the king's subjects dare buy at higher rates, and the alternative usually was, either to accept the king's prices or to depart without effecting a sale. In either case the voyage would be attended with a decided loss. This, of course, Mr. Crawfurd strongly objected to, as it must evidently check commercial enterprise, to say nothing of its obvious unfairness. But free-trade is unknown at Siam, and the king, through his minister, naturally refused the slightest concession on this point. Here the mission may be said to have terminated. While such a privilege remains, and is asserted, no foreign nation can have any encouragement to trade with the Siamese. A visitation of the cholera and the arrival of an embassy from Cochin-China, again interrupted the negotiation; but it might have ended here. At the next interview the political question was discussed; and at the next after that; the feeling displayed on the subject by the Siamese being so strong as to compel Mr. Crawfurd to use language "such as a Siamese minister could not have been much accustomed to." The negotiation dragged its slow length along for a few more days, and only resulted in a vague promise on the part of the king to give English trading ships all the encouragement in his power.

The last embassy to Siam of any note or importance was that from the United States of America, under the charge of Mr. Eliot, the Envoy. The "Peacock," American sloop of war, which had then been for several years cruising on a scientific and exploring expedition in the Eastern Seas, was, one fine morning, quite unexpectedly, reported to have anchored off the Bar of Siam, much to the delight of the Europeans resident at Bangkok, especially the American missionaries, and not a little to the discomfort of the Siamese, who looked upon these visitations from men-of-war as neither more nor less than the precursor to a general invasion of their country, and considered the officers and men of the expedition as so many spies, who, under the plea of scientific acquirements, were laying plans and devising schemes for the easiest and most effectual method of subduing the empire. Not a leaf was plucked or a stone picked up by the curious and learned that accompanied the expedition to add to their stock of mineralogical and botanical curiosities, but the act was attributed to some sinister purposes. Regularly paid and enlisted spies dodged their every movement, and reported proceedings regularly at head quarters. The reception of the mission was barely civil, and exacted only so much respect as was inculcated by a wholesome dread of consequences, and the fact of a vessel of war, well armed and equipped, being actually on the spot, ready at a moment's warning to vindicate the honour of the American flag. Many tempting propositions were made by the Envoy in his endeavours to persuade the Siamese Government to swerve a little from the cold and rigid formalities attendant on the then existing treaties between Siam and other European Powers, and Brother Jonathan strove mightily and warily to ingratiate the officers of state, so that their influence might tend to facilitate pending negotiations; but all was in vain. Gifts and civilities were received and returned—assurances given and faith pledged that the amelioration of the interests of both parties should be always a weighty consideration; but further than this, nothing could be effected. No ratified treaty or

written document could be obtained ; and the "Peacock" sailed again, taking with her the Envoy and his party ; the officers highly delighted with the many pleasant hours they had passed in the society of European friends, both in following up the wild sports of the East and in the more social enjoyment of dinner parties and picnics ; but the diplomatic portion of the expedition sadly chagrined to think that all their efforts for the bettering of American traffic had been as futile and void of success as all the like embassies had heretofore proved. Oysterlike, the Siamese King vastly preferred being entirely dependent for all the comforts and luxuries of this life upon the resources that were enclosed within that shell—his own kingdom. It remains for England—the most enterprising country in the world—to penetrate into the heart of an unknown country abounding with unheard-of resources, and rich beyond computation, and there to establish a firm footing for trade, and one which will open to the ports of Great Britain and of our vast Indian Empire additional markets for our manufactures, and new and rich fields for our trade.

SIAMESE SONGS.



HEN Loubère visited Siam in 1687, he reported—"I could not get a Siamese song well translated, so different is their way of thinking from ours; yet I have seen some pictures, as, for example, of a pleasant garden, where a lover invites his mistress to come. I have also seen some expressions which, to me, appeared full of gross immorality, although this had not the same effect in their language. But besides love-songs, they have, likewise, some historical and moral songs: I have heard the *Pagayeurs* sing some, of which they made me to understand the sense. Some have told me that one of the brothers to the King of Siam composed some moral poems, very highly esteemed, to which he himself set the tune."

I am able, however, to give translations of two songs, which will give some idea of what these productions are among the Siamese.

THE BOATMAN'S SONG.

An amorous Siamese swain, stricken with the charms of some black-toothed damsel, has composed a song which is much in vogue amongst the boatmen class, and which being translated is, to a foreigner's ears, almost as charming as the Nigger Song of "*de Boatmen Dance*," and infinitely less melodious. The maiden's name is *Chin*, one very common amongst Siamese and Burmese.

A happy and reckless youth I am,
As I ply my boat on the deep *Menam;*
My song shall end, and my song begin,
In praise of thee, my darling *Chin.*

Chorus.

Begin with the head, and end with the toes:
My praise shall be strong as the tide that flows.

Who that has seen has e'er forgot
Thy pretty hair tied in a sweet knot;
And prettier still than the tuft of hair
Thy brow, unwrinkled by grief or care.
Cho.—Begin with the head, &c.

The eyebrows black, I'm sure that each
Is as shiny as any fine healthy leech:
No elephant, white, black, short, or tall,
Can boast of such eyes, so loving and small.
Cho.—Begin with the head, &c.

As for thy nose, I'm certain that
None other has one so wide and flat:
And the ebony's bark, in its core beneath,
Was never so black as thy shiny teeth.
Cho.—Begin with the head, &c.

Complexion of gold, and a high cheekbone,
Such treasures with pride would a princess own.
Right proud am I to woo and win
Such a lovely bride as my darling *Chin*.
Cho.—Begin with the head, &c.

Thy frame is as light as the forest stag,
And as strong and firm as a rocky crag:
Thy feet and toes (the more good luck)
As pretty and broad as the web-footed duck.
Cho.—Begin with the head, &c.

My life I'd give a prize to him
Who produces a wife like thee can swim;
Or paddle with skill a heavy canoe,
'Gainst the mightiest wind that ever blew.
Cho.—Begin with the head, &c.

Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. This translation may give some faint idea of the general elegance of Siamese verse, and the sing-song, droning nature of the music, but too fitly adapted to the poetry.

THE CULPRIT PRIEST'S LAMENT.

In a preceding chapter I have alluded to the celibacy of the priests of Siam. Any departure from this is severely punished, and the following is a translation of a lament supposed to be uttered by a guilty priest, previous to his suffering along with his partner in guilt the dreadful punishment attached to their transgression.

I was as a bird on the banian tree,
In the heat of the sultry day,
That vainly sought from the hawk to flee,
As its shadow pass'd o'er that way;

As the bird's heart flutters beneath the gaze
Of the falcon's deadly eye:
So fluttered mine, when in sore amaze,
I saw thy form draw nigh;

For never on earth or on sea before,
Had I seen a thing so bright;
Thy face was love, and thy smile was more
Resplendent than the light:
And thy tread was as soft as the timid doe,
When it noiselessly seeks the brook;
And the terror that fill'd me, who can know
When entranced by thy first look?

I trembling imagined in thee I saw
A spirit from realms above,
And my aching heart grew sad and sore,
With hopeless madd'ning love.
In fascination's powerful spell
I was bound as the bird is bound,
Which, ere to the serpent's jaw it fell,
Flew circling round and round;

For I hover'd by day around the spot,
Where I knew that danger dwelt;
And the cares and sorrows of life forgot,
In the rapturous bliss I felt.
When a smile or a glance like a cheering ray
Of sunlight pierced my breast,
And vainly I sought to hie me away
From thy charms and be at rest.

And cursed be the day and the fatal hour
I learned to love thee well;
For a hidden sting lurk'd beneath the flower,
And loving, I sinn'd, and fell—

And a fearful doom waits thee and me,
A fearful doom indeed ;
'Twere better to drown 'neath the fathomless sea,
Or on battle-field to bleed.

Behold the faggots blaze up high,
The smoke is black and dense ;
The sinews burst, and crack, and fly :
Oh suffering intense !
The roar of fire and shriek of pain,
And the blood that boils and splashes ;
These all consume—the search were vain
For the lovers' mingled ashes.

SIAMESE PUNISHMENT.

SIAMESE MUSIC.

THE accompanying cut gives a just and striking picture of a Siamese band of musicians. Their instruments are extremely primitive, such as one might imagine were in vogue in the days of the psalmist David. The hautboy player is seldom, like the rest of his brother musicians, seated on the floor. This important individual, who is usually the leader of the band, chooses a kneeling posture, as the one not only best suited to his dignity, but as affording him more freedom of action; and he might as soon be expected to jump over the moon, as to play an air, however doleful and dolorous, without swaying his body to and

fro to keep time with the movements of the melody. The band-master is usually professionally a snake-charmer, and his long practice in that rather unenviable calling, has forced on him the habit of rocking his body to and fro with greater or less energy, as the time and cadence of the music may require. Without this, he could never fascinate the cobra, who with head erect, and venomed tongue stuck out in the air, is compelled, whilst under the deep spell of music, to follow every motion of the charmer, longing, yet totally unable either to stir from the spot, or to dart its envenomed fangs into the heart's blood of him it would fain destroy, and yet cannot resist implicitly obeying. The Siamese band-master and snake-charmer prefers this position, because it gives his arms full swing, and whilst playing on with one hand, and keeping the cobra's head and neck in perpetual motion, he cautiously withdraws the other hand, and watching for a favourable moment, darts at the serpent's neck, and firmly holding on till the whole body of the creature has been wove round his arm, coolly proceeds by the aid of a small pair of pincers to extract the snake's teeth and venom bag: and then the cobra has become a harmless plaything. So, in his double profession of musician and snake-charmer, this individual demands no small degree of respect from his brethren. His instrument has six holes for notes, is roughly and carelessly shaped, has no keys, and has only acquired a high polish from the fact of its having been continually handled about and played upon during the last ten or fifteen years. The wood of which it is made is commonly from the jack-fruit tree, a wood capable of receiving a high polish, and in my opinion admirably adapted for guitars. The tones produced by this Siamese hautboy, even at the best of time, and whilst executing the liveliest airs, are heart-rendingly dolorous and out of tune; nothing will bear comparison with it, with the exception, perhaps, of old and cracked bagpipes, such as the Frenchmen supposed had occasioned the death of all the nightingales in Scotland. Next to the band-master comes the

performer on the Siamese pianoforte. This, however, is in reality strictly a Burmese instrument of Burmese invention, and on which the Burmese far excel their flat-nosed neighbours. The notes consist of oblong pieces of wood, hewn and shaped from the cashoo-nut tree, and varying in size from six inches by one broad, to fourteen inches by two; these are strung upon pieces of twine, a knot intervening between each note to prevent jarring and confusion. These are fastened on a mahogany stand of about three feet in length and a foot high; and the method of performing upon this instrument is by striking them with two knob-ended *bâtons*, one of which the player holds in either hand. The effect is harmonious. The notes are regular, and admit of a vast scope for cadence and harmony of touch, and there are some of the Burmese who fly over the notes with amazing rapidity and precision.

After the piano-forte player comes the performer on the *lupturna*, an instrument purely of Siamese invention, and which consists of from ten to a dozen long perforated reeds, or young bamboos, in a double range—confined together by means of a hollow, wooden band, and closely cemented with wax, so as to prevent the escape of air or sound. The orifice at one end is applied to the mouth, and no skill is required in producing the most melodious sounds—sometimes loud and sweet enough to resemble the peal from a church organ. The man has merely to blow into this orifice, and, with his fingers, cover or open the little holes that are perforated into the canes on either row just above the tube that is applied to the mouth. The tabour player comes next: his is an instrument common to all eastern nations; it consists of a baked earthen vessel, with very much the shape of an hour glass, open at both ends—to one of which a piece of sheep's skin or parchment is firmly attached. Striking on this, he keeps time with the rest of the musicians; and it answers very much the same purposes as a kettle-drum. Lastly in the circle of performers, we come to the veritable banjo—with this difference in its construction, that it is manufactured

entirely out of a large long-necked gourd, which, when green, is sliced in halves longways, cleared of pulp and seed, and so left to dry in the sun. When dry, the aperture is covered with parchment, and from four to six strings strung after the fashion of a guitar. Its notes are melodious enough when well touched, and it is capable of forming an excellent accompaniment to the voice. These constitute a Siamese band, with the addition only, on large processions and festive occasions, of a big drum and a set of triangles. I consider the Siamese music execrable; nor, indeed, is there any nation in the East that can be said to possess even the first rudiments of music, save and except the Malays inhabiting the straits of Malacca.

SIAMESE LANGUAGE.

THE subject of the Siamese language is much too extensive to be treated of in a work like this, that does not aspire higher than to be a personal narrative. Still a few specimens may be given of the words in most common use, denoting the most familiar articles :—

Pra—a great cleaver, used as a hatchet.
Ciou—a joiner's chisel.
Lendi—a saw.
Kob—a joiner's plane.
Quiob—a spade.
Reuang—a house.
Savu—the bamboo pillars which bear the house.
Root—the two transverses or bamboos laid across, along the front and along the back part of a house.
Preuang—hurdles serving to plank the lower or first floor.
Fak—sticks flattened and joined together at equal distances, to lay over the floor instead of a carpet.
Mesa—the mother wall ; it consists of the hurdles or wainscoting which serves as the outward wall.
Fa—the hurdles which make the principal enclosures.
Lank fa—the son of the enclosure, that is to say the lesser enclosures.
Krabouang—the tiles.
Pe—the roof.
Hong—a chamber.
Gadai—the ladder of the house.

Te-non—the place where the bed is to lie on when they have no bedstead. *Non* signifies to sleep; *te* signifies a place.

Mon—a pillow.

Fouk-song-non—the mattress: *song* signifies under, and *non* to sleep.

Prom—a carpet for the feet.

Hip—a chest.

Hip-lin—a chest with drawers.

Me-can—a pot to put water in; *can* signifies a pot; *me* means mother.

Touas—a porcelain plate or dish.

Quion—a spoon.

Mid—a knife.

Mid-caune—a razor; *caune* signifies to shave, so that the word literally means a knife to shave, or a shaving-knife.

Tim-quian—a candlestick; *quian* is a candle of yellow wax.

Lom-pok—a bonnet of ceremony; *lom* signifying bonnet, and *pok* high.

Pa-naung—a linen sash, worn round the lower part of the body.

Lena-kao—the muslin shirt.

Moak—a hat.

Penn-nok-sap—a musket.

Peun—a cannon; with the addition of *yai*, it means a great cannon.

Touan—a lance.

Dab—a sabre.

Kantar—a bow.

T,ham hai san—to shorten.

T,ham o mong—to mine.

Rang hai—to weep.

Kep wai—to retain.

Chak k, hrai—to wish.

Tang prass—to incur a fine.

Chai ān—of a tender disposition.

Chai reo—of a quick apprehension.

Mee-nám chai—discreet, polite.
Tang kan—necessary.
Tak chai nuk naa—greatly alarmed.
Satrookun—mimical.
Me tem paee—plentiful.
Tèm su nook—delightful.
Tem chang—spiteful.
Mée pan ya—wise.
K, ho hok—false.
Déug déug—reddish.
Dam dam—blackish.
Mai so deé—tolerably well.
Mai k, loá—fearless.
T, hee dāk māi—a flower pot.
T, hee fang p, heè—a place of burial.
Nok yoong—a peacock ; literally, a bird.
Chess—sick.
K, hwam chéss—sickness.
Kwam eudoo—kindness.
T, han—how.
Khee—how many.
Khrai—who.
Dai—what.
Rai—what ?
Mak—many.
Náee—few.
Yai—great.
Lek—little.
Yaău—long.
San—short.
Ná t, hee nee—come here.
Aneetcha—sister.
Pau (ke) tré—sound the trumpet.
Me-hek—loadstone, or mother of iron.
K, hongk, ha—water ; literally, the Goddess Gunga.

Lau chaee—grandson.
Lau yeeng—granddaughter.
Po—grandfather.
Yăă—grandmother.
Achaee—uncle.
Taphaee—aunt.
Phee—eldest brother or sister.
Pang—youngest brother or sister.
Samee D p hoa—husband.
Me-a—wife.
Maiesse—queen.
Akk-ha mahesse—princess.
Pum—a potato.
Bootchee—son.
Bootyeug—daughter.

1—*Nung.*	10—*Seép.*
2—*Sāng.*	11—*Seep bet.*
3—*Săm.*	12—*Seep sāng.*
4—*See.*	13—*Seep sàm.*
5—*Ha.*	14—*Yee seep.*
6—*Hōk.*	100—*Rāe mung.*
7—*Chet.*	1000—*P,hau nung.*
8—*Pĕt.*	10,000—*Mun nung.*
9—*Kaû.*	100,000—*Seu nung.*

LOUBÈRE'S ACCOUNT OF THE SIAMESE.

It has often been remarked of the natives of the East that they are almost unchangeable in their modes of government, habits of life, and ways of thinking. Century after century passes away unmarked by progress and undistinguished by change. Traveller succeeds traveller at long intervals of time and each repeats unconsciously the observations and diffuses the information of the other.

The Siamese certainly form no exception to this remark. Such as they were in the days of the early Jesuit missionaries—such are they found now. La Loubère visited them in 1687, and published a book descriptive of the country and its inhabitants, which, with little change, would apply equally well to Siam and the Siamese of the present day. Where is the nation of Europe of which the same could be said? The England of 1688 was very different from the England of 1852. The activity, the restlessness, and the change of any year between these two dates would almost crowd a century of the history of such countries as Siam.

In illustration of this, the following translations from Loubère's interesting, and now rare work, will, it is hoped, prove of value :—

"DRESS OF THE SIAMESE.

"The Siamese hardly clothe themselves. Tacitus reports concerning the German infantry, in his time, that it was either all naked or covered with light coats, and even at this present time (1688) there are some savages in North America who go almost naked, which proves, in my opinion, that the simplicity

of manners, as well as the heat, is the cause of the nakedness of the Siamese as it is of the nudity of these savages. It is not that clothes are insupportable to the French who visit Siam, but it is not healthy for them to unclothe themselves, because the injuries of excessively hot air are not less serious than those of extremely cold air ; yet with this difference, that in very hot climates it is sufficient for health to cover the stomach. The Spaniards do for this reason cover it with a buffalo's skin ; but the Siamese, whose manners are plain in everything, have chosen to habituate themselves from their infancy to an almost entire nudity.

"They go with their feet naked and their head bare, and for decency only they gird their reins and thighs, down to the knees, with a piece of painted cloth, about two yards and a half long, which the Portuguese call *pagne*. Sometimes, instead of a painted cloth, the pagne is a silken stuff, either plain or embroidered with gold and silver.

"The mandarins or officers wear, besides the pagne, a muslin shirt, which serves as a kind of vest. They pluck it off and wrap it about their middle when they approach a mandarin much higher in dignity, to express to him their readiness to go where he may please to send them. These shirts have no neck-band, and are open before. The sleeves hang down almost to their wrists, being about two feet wide, but without being plaited above or below.

"In winter they sometimes put over their shoulders a breadth of stuff or painted linen, either like a mantle or a scarf, the ends of which they wind very neatly about their arms.

"But the King of Siam wears a vest of some excellent satin, brocaded, the sleeves of which are very straight, and reach down to the wrist, and as we apparel ourselves against the cold under our waistcoats, he puts this next under the shirt which I have described, and which he adorns with lace or European paint. It is not lawful for any Siamese to wear this sort of vest, unless the King gives it to him, and he makes this present only to the most considerable of his officers.

"He sometimes also gives them another vest or garment of scarlet, which is to be worn only in war or at hunting. This garment reaches to the knees, and has eight or ten buttons in front. The sleeves are wide, but without ornament, and so short that they do not reach the elbows.

"The difference between the dress of the women and that of the men is, that the women fastening their *pagne* lengthwise round their bodies, in the same way as the men do, let it fall down broadways, somewhat like a close coat, so as to reach half way down the leg; whereas the men tie the two ends of the *pagne* tightly around their loins. The women have no covering but the *pagne*, but among the rich it is not unusual to wear a scarf. They sometimes wrap the ends of the scarf about their arms, but the most fashionable way, and that which is considered as the best to set off their beauty, is to put it singly over their bosoms at the middle, smooth the wrinkles, and let the two ends hang down behind over their shoulders.

"They wear rings on the three last fingers of each hand, and the fashion permits them to put on as many as can possibly be kept on. They wear no necklaces, but the women and children wear ear-rings, generally of gold, silver, or vermilion gilt, and in the shape of a pear. The boys and girls of a good family have bracelets, but only to six or seven years of age, and they equally wear them on their arms or legs. They are of the same material as the ear-rings."

"PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF THE SIAMESE.

"The Siamese are rather small in stature, but their bodies are well proportioned, which I principally attribute to their not swaddling in their infancy. The care that we take to form the shape of our children is not always so successful as the liberty which they leave to nature to proceed in forming theirs. The shape of the face in both men and women is more of an oval than a lozenge; it is broad and high at the cheek-bones, but the fore-

head suddenly contracts and terminates almost as much in a point as the chin. Their eyes are small and not over brisk, and the white thereof is generally yellowish. Their jaws are hollow by reason they are too high above, their mouths are large, their lips thick and pale, and their teeth blackened. Their complexion is coarse and of a brown mixed with red, to which the continual sun-burning very much contributes.

"The hair is black, thick, and lank, and both sexes wear it so short that all round the head it reaches only to the tip of the ears. Underneath this they are very closely shaved, and this fashion greatly pleases them. The women raise the hair on their forehead, but without fastening it again, and some let it grow behind to wreathe it. The young unmarried wear it after a particular manner. They cut with scissors very close the crown of the head, and then all round they pull off a small circle of hair about the thickness of two crown-pieces, and underneath they let the rest of their hair grow down almost to the shoulders. The Spaniards, by reason of the heat, frequently shave the crown of the head in this manner, but they pluck off nothing.

"They take care of their teeth, although they black them; they wash their hair with water and sweet oils as the Spaniards do. They use combs brought from China, which, instead of being all of a piece, like ours, are only a great many points or teeth tied close together with wires. They pluck the beard, of which they naturally have little, but they do not cut their nails, being satisfied with keeping them neat."

"SIAMESE LOVE OF GAMBLING.

"The Siamese love gaming to such an excess as to ruin themselves and lose their liberty, or that of their children; for, in this country, whoever has not wherewith to satisfy his creditor, sells his children to discharge his debt; and if this is insufficient, he himself becomes a slave."

MINES OF SIAM.

THE following account, given by Loubère, of the mines of Siam, fully bears out the statements in the preceding pages regarding the probable existence of great metallic wealth in the country:—

"No country has a greater reputation for being rich in mines than Siam; and the great number of idols and other works of art cast in metal shows that these mines have been better cultivated in former times than now. It is believed, likewise, that they thence extracted that great quantity of gold with which they have adorned not only their innumerable idols but the wainscot and roofs of their temples. They have likewise found many pits bearing marks of antiquity, and the remains of a great many furnaces, which are thought to have been abandoned during the wars with Pegu.

"The king who now reigns has not been able to find any vein of gold or silver that would repay the expense of working, although he has employed in this work some Europeans, and among the rest a Spaniard who had been in Mexico, and who found, if not a great fortune, at least his subsistence during twenty years, even up to the period of his death, by flattering the avarice of this prince with the imaginary promises of infinite treasure. After having dug and mined in several places they found only some very mean copper mines, though intermixed with a little gold and silver. Five hundred-weight of ore scarcely yielded an ounce of metal.

"From Siam we brought back Mr. Vincent, the physician. He understood mathematics and chemistry, and the King of Siam retained him some time at the work in his mines. He rectified the labours of the Siamese in some things, so that they could obtain a little more profit than formerly. He showed them a mine of very good steel (iron?) at the top of a mountain, which had already been worked, but which they had not

perceived. He discovered also one of antimony and several others, as well as a quarry of white marble. Besides this, he found out a gold-mine, which to him appeared very rich, as far as he was able to judge without trying it; but he did not show it to the natives. Several Siamese, mostly Talapoins or Priests, came secretly to consult him about the art of purifying and separating metals, and brought him various specimens of very rich ore. From some he extracted a very good quantity of fine silver, and from others a variety of metals.

"The Siamese have iron mines, but they are not very productive, and besides, the natives are bad forgemen. They obtain padlocks from Japan, some of which are of iron, and are very good; others are of copper, and are very bad."

The King of Siam, who reigned when Loubère was there, had, among other reasons for supposing that his country abounded in mines of gold and silver, the following, which is worth noticing, on account of its originality:—Extensive mines of gold and silver exist in Mexico and Peru; as Siam is nearly the antipodes to those countries, and as the king supposed the metallic veins must pass right through the earth, it naturally followed that the gold and silver of Mexico and Peru must reappear on the other side of the world in Siam!

"MODE OF PREPARING TEA.

"The Siamese prepare their tea in this manner. They have copper pots tinned on the inside wherein the water is boiled. It is boiled very quickly, because the copper is very thin. This copper comes from Japan, if my memory fails me not, and it is so easy to work that I question whether we have any so pliant in Europe. These pots are called *boulis*, and on the other hand they have *boulis* of red earth, which is without taste, though without varnish. They first rinse the earthen pot with boiling water to heat it; then they put in as much tea as one can take up with the finger and thumb, and afterwards fill it with boiling

water, and after having covered it they still pour boiling water on the outside : they do not stop the spout as we do. When the tea is sufficiently infused, that is to say, when the leaves are precipitated, they pour the liquor into china dishes, which, at first, they fill only half, to the end that if it appear too strong they may temper it by pouring in water, which they still keep boiling in the copper pot. They continue adding boiling water to the earthen pot until they find that the strength of the tea is gone. They put no sugar into the dishes, because they have none refined which is not candy, and it melts too slowly. They, therefore, take a little in the mouth and champ it as they drink the tea. When they would have no more tea they turn the cup down on the saucer, because it is the greatest incivility in them to refuse anything, and if they left the cup standing they would be served with more tea, which they are obliged to receive. But they forbear to fill the dish unless they wish to testify to the guest that he is not expected to come back to the house, in which case the dish is re-filled, even though the cup be turned down."

" SIAMESE HOUSES.

"The houses of the Siamese are small, but surrounded with pretty large grounds. Hurdles of cleft bamboo, often not closely compacted, make the floors, walls, and roof. The piles on which they are erected to avoid the inundations are bamboos as thick as a man's leg, and about thirteen feet above the ground, by reason that the waters sometimes rise to that height : there are never more than four or six, on which other bamboos are laid across instead of beams. The stairs are a ladder of bamboo, which hangs on the outside like the ladder of a windmill. And, as their stables also are in the air, they have climbers made of hurdles by which the cattle enter.

"If every house stands single, it is rather for the privacy of the family, which would be discovered through such thin walls, than for fear of fire. They make their little fire in the courts and

none in the houses; and in any case it is impossible for a fire to do any great damage. Three hundred houses, which were burned at Siam in our time, were rebuilt in two days. On a time when a bomb was shot to please the King of Siam, who beheld it at a distance, from one of the windows of his palace, it was necessary, for this purpose, to remove three houses, and the proprietors had them carried away, with their furniture, in less than an hour. Their hearth or chimney is a basket-full of earth, supported by three sticks, like a tripod. In the same manner, they place the fires in the forests when hunting the elephants."

"RESTRICTIONS ON COMMERCE.

"Commerce requires a certain liberty. No person can resolve to go to Siam, necessarily to sell unto the king what is carried thither, and to buy of him alone what we would carry thence, when this was not the product of the kingdom. For though there were several foreign ships together at Siam, the trade was not permitted from one ship to the other, nor with the inhabitants of the country, natives or foreigners, till that the king, under pretence of a preference due to his royal dignity, had purchased what was best in the ships, and at his own rate to sell it afterwards as he pleased: because that, when the season for the departure of the ships presses on, the merchants choose rather to sell to great loss and dearly to buy a new cargo, than to wait at Siam a new season to depart without hopes of making a better trade." [In illustration of this extract, see the account of Mr. Crawfurd's embassy.]

"GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE SIAMESE.

"In general the Siamese have more moderation than we have. Their humours are as calm as their heaven, which changes only twice a year, and insensibly, when it turns by little and little from rain to fair weather, and from fair weather to rain. They act only by necessity, and do not, like us, place merit in action.

It seems not rational to them that labour and pains should be the fruit and reward of virtue. They have the good fortune to be born philosophers, and it may be that if they were not born such, they would not become so more than we. I therefore willingly believe what the ancients have reported, that philosophy came from the Indies into Europe, and that we have been more concerned at the insensibility of the Indians than the Indians have been at the wonders which our inquietude has produced, in the discovery of so many different arts, whereof we flatter ourselves, perhaps to no purpose, that necessity was the mother."

MAXIMS OF THE TALAPOINS, OR PRIESTS, OF SIAM.

LOUBÈRE gives a translation from the Siamese of the maxims of the Talapoins, or Priests of Siam. A selection of these is given in the following pages. Some are omitted, which consider several of the actions of the priests rather "too curiously." The remarks within brackets are those of Loubère :—

Kill no man. [They not only do not kill, but they never strike any person.]

Steal not.

Glorify not yourself, saying that you have arrived at sanctity. [Every man who is not a Talapoin cannot become holy, that is to say, he cannot arrive at a certain degree of merit.]

Dig not the earth. [This command is said to be laid down out of a strange kind of respect entertained for the "mother of us all."]

Cause not any tree to die. [They are prohibited from even cutting a branch.]

Kill no animal.

Drink no intoxicating liquor.

Do not eat rice after dinner. [They may eat fruit in the evening, and chew betel all the day long.]

Regard not songs, dances, nor players on instruments.

Use no perfumes.

Neither sit nor sleep in a place as high as that of your superior.

Keep neither gold nor silver. [They are prohibited from touching it, but this rule is ill observed. The trade of a Talapoin is a trade to grow rich, and when they are wealthy enough, they quit the temples and marry.]

Entertain not yourself with things that do not concern religion.

Do no work which is not the work of religion.

Give not flowers unto women.

Contract not friendship with laymen, in hopes of receiving alms from them.

Borrow nothing of laymen.

Lend not unto usury, though it be only a single cory.

Keep neither lance, nor sword, nor any arm of war.

Eat not excessively.

Sleep not too much.

Sing no worldly songs.

Play not on any instrument, and eschew all sports and diversions.

Judge not your neighbour; say not that he is good or this is wicked.

Do not shake your arms in walking. [This rule is little observed.]

Climb not upon trees. [The reason for this rule is, the fear of breaking any of the branches.]

Bake no tile, nor burn any wood. [This is out of respect to the earth and the wood. It is as bad to bake a tile as to bake rice, and it is a wicked act to destroy wood.]

Wink not with your eyes in speaking, and look not with contempt.

Labour not for money. [The Talapoins ought to live on charity, and not on the labour of their hands.]

Look not upon women to please your eyes.

Make no incisions that may draw blood.

Neither buy nor sell anything.

In eating do not make the noise *tchibe, tchibe, tchiabe, tchiabe*, as dogs do. [This is the unpleasant noise which some persons make in chewing slowly and gently.]

Sleep not in a place exposed to view.

Give no medicines which contain poison. [This is on account

of the danger of killing. They are, however, not prohibited from the art of physic, on the contrary, they practise it to a great extent. From this circumstance the Siamese, so far from being scandalised to see the missionaries practising medicine, tolerate and love them all the more. It is necessary that the missionaries should freely cure the sick, either by the art of medicine or by miracle.]

A TALAPOIN SINS

If, in walking along the streets, he has not his senses composed.

If he do not shave his beard, his hair, and his eyebrows, and dress his nails. [I know not whether this has any other foundation than an excess of neatness.]

If, on being seated, he allows his feet to be suspended or extended. [Modesty, in their opinion, requires that the legs should be crossed, and the feet placed near the knees.]

If, after having eaten, he does not gather the remains for the next day.

If he has not several garments.

If he seems to be as austere as a Talapoin of the woods, and pretending to keep the rules more exactly than others, performs his meditations in places where he is seen, while he observes nothing of all this when he is alone and unobserved.

If he receives an alms, and goes presently to bestow it on another.

If he speaks to a woman in a secret place.

If he concerns himself in any of the affairs of the king, except those which concern religion.

If he cultivates the earth, or breeds ducks, poultry, cows, buffalos, elephants, horses, pigs, dogs, after the manner of laymen.

If, in preaching, he does not speak in the Balie language. [The Balie is the sacred as distinguished from the vulgar language in Siam. This maxim is not well rendered in the

translation. Their way of preaching is to read out of the Balie, where they ought to change nothing ; but they must begin in the vulgar tongue, and say nothing which is not in the Balie.]

If he speaks one thing and thinks another.

If he speaks evil of another.

If, on being wakened, he does not rise immediately, but turns himself on one side and the other. [It is necessary that it be the hour of rising, that is to say, that there be light enough to enable them to discern the veins of their hands.]

If he seats himself on the same mat with a woman.

If he bakes rice ; because it is a killing of the life that exists in seeds.

If he eats anything that has not been offered to him with joined hands. [This is a piece of vanity; for the respect due to the priests requires that everything be given with both hands. The Talapoins believing themselves holy, think themselves highly superior to the laymen, whom they consider as loaded with sin. They salute no person, not even the king ; and when the Sancrat, or superior priest, preaches or speaks to the king, his Majesty places himself behind a veil. When the king cannot avoid a Talapoin he salutes him ; but the Talapoin does not salute the king.]

If he covets another's estate.

If he reviles the earth, the wind, the fire, the water, or any other thing whatever.

If he excites persons to quarrel.

If he gets upon a horse, an elephant, or in a palanquin. [He ought not to burden beast, nor man, nor tree.]

If he clothes himself with rich garments.

If he rubs his body against anything.

If he puts flowers in his ears.

If he wears shoes which conceal his heels.

If he plants flowers and trees. [The Talapoins consider it sinful in them to dig holes in the earth.]

If he receives anything from the hand of a woman. [The

woman lays the alms which she bestows on the Talapoin in some place, and the Talapoin takes it where the woman has put it.]

If he loves not every one equally. [That is *not* to say that he must love another as well as himself.]

If he eats anything that has life ; as, for example, the grains which may yet bear fruit. [But they are not forbidden to eat anything that *has had* life.]

If he cuts or plucks up anything that has yet life.

If he makes an idol. [They consider the idol is above the man, and therefore it is inconsistent that the idol should be the work of the man, because in justice the work is inferior to the workman. The laymen, therefore, who make the idols are thereby guilty of sin ; but, according to the priests, that kind of sin is inevitable. There are, however, no household idols, so that the laymen make idols only for the temple.]

If he does not fill up a ditch which he has made. [He sins in making the ditch, and he sins if he does not repair the evil he has done.]

If having no work to do he tucks up the tail of his *pagne*.

If he eats in gold or silver.

If he sleeps after he has eaten, instead of performing the service of religion.

If after having eaten what has been given to him in charity, he pleases to make remarks on the food, saying this was good or that was not good. [These maxims savour of sensuality, and not of mortification.]

If he glorifies himself by saying, " I am the son of a mandarin," or, "My mother is rich."

If he wears red, black, green, or white *pagnes*. [The usual colour of the priest's dress is yellow.]

If in laughing he raises his voice.

If in preaching he changes something in the Balie text to please sinners.

If he gives charms to render persons invulnerable. [They

believe it possible to render themselves invulnerable against the blows of the executioners in the execution of justice.]

If he boasts that he is more learned than the rest.

If he covets gold or silver, saying, "When I go out of the convent, I will marry, and be at expense."

If he grieves to lose his relations by death. [It is not lawful for the *Cremg*, that is the saints, to lament the *Cahat*, or the laymen.]

If he goes out in the evening to visit any persons except his father or mother, or his sisters, or his brethren, or if he should unawares contrive to quarrel by the way.

If he gives *pagnes* of gold or silver to other than his father or mother, brethren or sisters.

If he runs out of the convent to seize *pagnes*, or gold or silver which he may suppose some one has stolen.

If he sits upon a carpet interwoven with gold or silver which has not been given to him, but which he himself has caused to be made.

If he sits down without taking a *pagne* to sit upon. [This pagne is called a *Santat*, and serves to raise the Talapoin when he is seated. Sometimes they make use of a buffalo's skin several times folded for this purpose.]

If, while walking the streets, he has not buttoned a certain button worn in the garment, and if, on going into a *balon* or canoe, he does not unbutton this very button. [I know not the reason for this maxim.]

If, seeing a company of maidens seated, he coughs or makes a noise to induce them to turn their heads.

If he does not put his clothes on very early in the morning.

If he runs in the street as if he were pursued.

If he has not learned certain numbers and calculations. [They are superstitious numbers.]

If, going into any one's house, he makes a noise with his feet and walks heavily.

If he judges of the persons that he sees, saying, "This one is handsome," or, "That one is unhandsome."

If he boldly looks upon men.

If he derides or rails at any one.

If he sleeps on something high.

If he wrangles with any one at the same time that he eats.

If in eating he lets rice fall on one side and the other.

If, after having eaten and washed his feet, he picks his teeth and then whistles with his lips in presence of laymen.

If he threatens any one with punishment so as to make himself feared.

If, in going anywhere, he resolves not to keep the commandments.

If he washes his body and takes the current of the water above another Talapoin older than himself.

If he forges iron. [This also proceeds from their desire not to extinguish life. Iron cannot be forged without extinguishing the fire which has made it red.]

If, while meditating on the things of religion, he doubts of anything he does not clearly understand, and yet, out of vanity, will not ask another who might explain it.

If he knows not the three seasons of the year, and how he ought to make the conferences at every season. [The *three* seasons are—the Winter, the Little Summer, and the Great Summer.]

If he knows that another Talapoin owes money to any one, and nevertheless enters into the temple with this Talapoin. [We have before seen a rule which prohibits them to borrow from laymen.]

If he is at enmity or angry with another Talapoin, and yet comes with that Talapoin to the conferences which are made about matters of religion.

If he terrifies any one.

If he causes any one to be seized by whom he loses less than a tikol. But if he loses more than this sum he must be dismissed.

If he gives medicines to a man who is not sick. [Preventive medicines are not allowed.]

If he whistles with his mouth to divert himself.

If he cries like robbers.

If he makes a fire or covers it. [It is not lawful to kindle the fire, for that is destroying what is burned, nor to cover it for fear of extinguishing it.]

If he eats any one of these eight sorts of flesh ; viz., of a man, an elephant, a horse, a serpent, a tiger, a crocodile, a dog, or a cat.

If he goes daily to beg alms at the same place.

If he causes a basin to be made of gold or silver to receive alms. [They receive alms in an iron plate.]

If he puts his hand into the pot.

If, in eating, he besmears himself round the mouth like a little child.

If he begs alms, and takes more than he can eat in one day.

If, in going to beg alms, he coughs that he may be seen.

If in walking the streets, he covers his head with his *pagne*, or puts on his hat, as laymen sometimes do. [They shelter themselves from the sun with a fan in the form of a screen, which they call *Talapat*.]

If in going to sing, or rather to rehearse, at a dead man's house, he does not reflect upon death, upon the certainty of all persons dying, upon the instability of human things, and upon the frailty of man's life. [This is partly the matter of their song over dead bodies.]

If in eating, he does not cross his legs. [In general, they cannot sit otherwise on any occasion.]

If being with laymen, and wrangling with them, he extends his feet.

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